







POEMS.



P O E M S.

BY

ALFRED TENNYSON.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

SECOND EDITION.

(21475-4
10.4.21)

LONDON :

EDWARD MOXON, DOVER STREET.

M D C C C X L I I I .

PR

5551

1843

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LONDON :

BRADBURY AND EVANS, PRINTERS, WHITEFRIARS.

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POEMS.

THE EPIC.

AT Francis Allen's on the Christmas-eve,—
The game of forfeits done—the girls all kiss'd
Beneath the sacred bush and past away—
The parson Holmes, the poet Everard Hall,
The host, and I sat round the wassail-bowl,
Then half-way ebb'd : and there we held a talk,
How all the old honour had from Christmas gone,
Or gone, or dwindled down to some odd games
In some odd nooks like this ; till I, tired out
With cutting eights that day upon the pond,
Where, three times slipping from the outer edge,

I bump'd the ice into three several stars.
Fell in a doze ; and half-awake I heard
The parson taking wide and wider sweeps,
Now harping on the church-commissioners,
Now hawking at Geology and schism ;
Until I woke, and found him settled down
Upon the general decay of faith
Right thro' the world, " at home was little left,
And none abroad : there was no anchor, none,
To hold by." Francis, laughing, clapt his hand
On Everard's shoulder, with " I hold by him."
" And I," quoth Everard, " by the wassail-bowl."
" Why yes," I said, " we knew your gift that way
At college : but another which you had,
I mean of verse (for so we held it then,)
What came of that ?" " You know," said Frank, " he flung
His epic of King Arthur in the fire !"
And then to me demanding why ? " Oh, sir,
He thought that nothing new was said, or else
Something so said 'twas nothing—that a truth
Looks freshest in the fashion of the day :
God knows—he has a mint of reasons : ask.

It pleased *me* well enough." "Nay, nay," said Hall.
"Why take the style of those heroic times ?
For nature brings not back the Mastodon,
Nor we those times ; and why should any man
Remodel models rather than the life ?
And these twelve books of mine (to speak the truth)
Were faint Homeric echoes, nothing worth,
Mere chaff and draff, much better burnt." "But I,"
Said Francis, "pick'd the eleventh from this hearth,
And have it : keep a thing, its use will come.
I hoard it as a sugar-plum for Holmes."
He laugh'd, and I, though sleepy, like a horse
That hears the corn-bin open, prick'd my ears,
For I remember'd Everard's college fame
When we were Freshmen : then at my request
He brought it, and the poet little urged,
But with some prelude of disparagement,
Read, mouthing out his hollow oes and aes,
Deep-chested music, and to this result.

MORTE D'ARTHUR.

So all day long the noise of battle roll'd
Among the mountains by the winter sea ;
Until King Arthur's table, man by man,
Had fall'n in Lyonness about their Lord,
King Arthur : then, because his wound was deep,
The bold Sir Bedivere uplifted him,
Sir Bedivere, the last of all his knights,
And bore him to a chapel nigh the field,
A broken chancel with a broken cross,
That stood on a dark strait of barren land.
On one side lay the Ocean, and on one
Lay a great water, and the moon was full.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere :
“ The sequel of to-day unsolders all
The goodliest fellowship of famous knights
Whereof this world holds record. Such a sleep

They sleep—the men I loved. I think that we
Shall nevermore, at any future time,
Delight our souls with talk of knightly deeds,
Walking about the gardens and the halls
Of Camelot, as in the days that were.
I perish by this people which I made,—
Though Merlin sware that I should come again
To rule once more—but let what will be, be,
I am so deeply smitten through the helm
That without help I cannot last till morn.
Thou therefore take my brand Excalibur,
Which was my pride : for thou rememberest how
In those old days, one summer noon, an arm
Rose up from out the bosom of the lake,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
Holding the sword—and how I row'd across
And took it, and have worn it, like a king :
And, wheresoever I am sung or told
In aftertime, this also shall be known :
But now delay not : take Excalibur,
And fling him far into the middle meer :
Watch what thou seëst, and lightly bring me word."

To him replied the bold Sir Bedivere :
" It is not meet, Sir King, to leave thee thus,
Aidless, alone, and smitten through the helm.
A little thing may harm a wounded man.
Yet I thy hest will all perform at full,
Watch what I see, and lightly bring thee word."

So saying, from the ruin'd shrine he stept
And in the moon athwart the place of tombs,
Where lay the mighty bones of ancient men,
Old knights, and over them the sea-wind sang
Shrill, chill, with flakes of foam. He, stepping down
By zigzag paths, and juts of pointed rock,
Came on the shining levels of the lake.

There drew he forth the brand Excalibur,
And o'er him, drawing it, the winter moon,
Brightening the skirts of a long cloud, ran forth
And sparkled keen with frost against the hilt :
For all the haft twinkled with diamond studs,
Myriads of topaz-lights, and jacinth-work
Of subtlest jewellery. He gazed so long
That both his eyes were dazzled, as he stood,
This way and that dividing the swift mind,

In act to throw : but at the last it seem'd
Better to leave Excalibur conceal'd
There in the many-knotted waterflags,
That whistled stiff and dry about the marge.
So strode he back slow to the wounded king.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere :
“ Hast thou perform'd my mission which I gave ?
What is it thou hast seen ? or what hast heard ? ”

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere :
“ I heard the ripple washing in the reeds,
And the wild water lapping on the crag.”

To whom replied King Arthur, faint and pale :
“ Thou hast betray'd thy nature and thy name,
Not rendering true answer, as beseem'd
Thy fëalty, nor like a noble knight :
For surer sign had follow'd, either hand,
Or voice, or else a motion of the meer.
This is a shameful thing for men to lie.
Yet now, I charge thee, quickly go again
As thou art lief and dear, and do the thing
I bad thee, watch, and lightly bring me word.”

Then went Sir Bedivere the second time,

Counting the dewy pebbles, fix'd in thought ;
But when he saw the wonder of the hilt,
How curiously and strangely chased, he smote
His palms together, and he cried aloud.

“ And if indeed I cast the brand away,
Surely a precious thing, one worthy note,
Should thus be lost for ever from the earth,
Which might have pleased the eyes of many men.
What good should follow this, if this were done ?
What harm, undone ? deep harm to disobey,
Seeing obedience is the bond of rule.
Were it well to obey then, if a king demand
An act unprofitable, against himself ?
The King is sick, and knows not what he does.
What record, or what relic of my lord
Should be to aftertime, but empty breath
And rumours of a doubt ? but were this kept,
Stored in some treasure-house of mighty kings,
Some one might show it at a joust of arms,
Saying, ‘ King Arthur’s sword, Excalibur,
Wrought by the lonely maiden of the Lake.
Nine years she wrought it, sitting in the deeps

Upon the hidden bases of the hills.
So might some old man speak in the aftertime
To all the people, winning reverence.
But now much honour and much fame were lost."

So spake he, clouded with his own conceit,
And hid Excalibur the second time,
And so strode back slow to the wounded King.

Then spoke King Arthur, breathing heavily :
" What is it thou hast seen ? or what hast heard ? "

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere :
" I heard the water lapping on the crag,
And the long ripple washing in the reeds. "

To whom replied King Arthur, much in wrath :
" Ah, miserable and unkind, untrue,
Unknightly, traitor-hearted ! Woe is me !
Authority forgets a dying king,
Laid widow'd of the power in his eye
That bow'd the will. I see thee what thou art.
For thou, the latest-left of all my knights,
In whom should meet the offices of all,
Thou wouldst betray me for the precious hilt ;
Either from lust of gold, or like a girl

Valuing the giddy pleasure of the eyes.
Yet, for a man may fail in duty twice,
And the third time may prosper, get thee hence :
But, if thou spare to fling Excalibur,
I will arise and slay thee with my hands."

Then quickly rose Sir Bedivere, and ran,
And, leaping down the ridges lightly, plunged
Among the bulrush-beds, and clutch'd the sword,
And strongly wheel'd and threw it. The great brand
Made lightnings in the splendour of the moon,
And flashing round and round, and whirl'd in an arch,
Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,
Seen where the moving isles of winter shock
By night, with noises of the northern sea.
So flash'd and fell the brand Excalibur :
But ere he dipt the surface, rose an arm
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
And caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him
Three times, and drew him under in the meer.
And lightly went the other to the King.

Then spoke King Arthur, drawing thicker breath :

“ Now see I by thine eyes that this is done.
Speak out : what is it thou hast heard, or seen ! ”

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere :

“ Sir King, I closed mine eyelids, lest the gems
Should blind my purpose, for I never saw,
Nor shall see, here or elsewhere, till I die,
Not though I live three lives of mortal men,
So great a miracle as yonder hilt.
Then with both hands I flung him, wheeling him ;
But when I look'd again, behold an arm,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
That caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him
Three times, and drew him under in the meer.”

And answer made King Arthur, breathing hard :

“ My end draws nigh ; 'tis time that I were gone.
Make broad thy shoulders to receive my weight,
And bear me to the margin ; yet I fear
My wound hath taken cold, and I shall die.”

So saying, from the pavement he half rose,
Slowly, with pain, reclining on his arm,
And looking wistfully with wide blue eyes
As in a picture. Him Sir Bedivere

Remorsefully regarded thro' his tears,
And would have spoken, but he found not words,
Then took with care, and kneeling on one knee,
O'er both his shoulders drew the languid hands,
And rising bore him thro' the place of tombs.

But, as he walk'd, King Arthur panted hard,
Like one that feels a nightmare on his bed
When all the house is mute. So sigh'd the King,
Muttering and murmuring at his ear "Quick, quick !
I fear it is too late, and I shall die."

But the other swiftly strode from ridge to ridge,
Clothed with his breath, and looking, as he walk'd,
Larger than human on the frozen hills.

He heard the deep behind him, and a cry
Before. His own thought drove him like a goad.
Dry clash'd his harness in the icy caves
And barren chasms, and all to left and right
The bare black cliff clang'd round him, as he based
His feet on juts of slippery crag that rang
Sharp-smitten with the dint of armed heels—
And on a sudden, lo ! the level lake,
And the long glories of the winter moon.

Then saw they how there hove a dusky barge,
Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern,
Beneath them ; and descending they were ware
That all the decks were dense with stately forms
Black-stoled, black-hooded, like a dream—by these
Three Queens with crowns of gold—and from them rose
A cry that shiver'd to the tingling stars,
And, as it were one voice, an agony
Of lamentation, like a wind, that shrills
All night in a waste land, where no one comes,
Or hath come, since the making of the world.

Then murmur'd Arthur, " Place me in the barge,"
And to the barge they came. There those three Queens
Put forth their hands, and took the King, and wept.
But she, that rose the tallest of them all
And fairest, laid his head upon her lap,
And loosed the shatter'd casque, and chafed his hands,
And call'd him by his name, complaining loud,
And dropping bitter tears against his brow
Striped with dark blood : for all his face was white
And colourless, and like the wither'd moon
Smote by the fresh beam of the springing east ;

And all his greaves and cuisses dash'd with drops
Of onset ; and the light and lustrous curls—
That made his forehead like a rising sun
High from the dâis-throne—were parch'd with dust,
Or, clotted into points and hanging loose,
Mix'd with the knightly growth that fringed his lips.
So like a shatter'd column lay the King ;
Not like that Arthur who, with lance in rest,
From spur to plume a star of tournament,
Shot thro' the lists at Camelot, and charged
Before the eyes of ladies and of kings.

Then loudly cried the bold Sir Bedivere,
“ Ah ! my Lord Arthur, whither shall I go ?
Where shall I hide my forehead and my eyes ?
For now I see the true old times are dead,
When every morning brought a noble chance,
And every chance brought out a noble knight.
Such times have been not since the light that led
The holy Elders with the gift of myrrh.
But now the whole ROUND TABLE is dissolved
Which was an image of the mighty world ;
And I, the last, go forth companionless,

And the days darken round me, and the years,
Among new men, strange faces, other minds."

And slowly answer'd Arthur from the barge :
" The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And God fulfils himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.
Comfort thyself : what comfort is in me ?
I have lived my life, and that which I have done
May He within himself make pure ! but thou—
If thou shouldst never see my face again,
Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice
Rise like a fountain, for me night and day.
For what are men better than sheep or goats
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
Both for themselves and those who call them friend ?
For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.
But now farewell. I am going a long way
With these thou seest—if indeed I go—
(For all my mind is clouded with a doubt)

To the island-valley of Avilion ;
Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
Nor ever wind blows loudly ; but it lies
Deep-meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard-lawns
And bowery hollows crown'd with summer sea,
Where I will heal me of my grievous wound."

So said he, and the barge with oar and sail
Moved from the brink, like some full-breasted swan
That, fluting a wild carol ere her death,
Ruffles her pure cold plume, and takes the flood
With swarthy webs. Long stood Sir Bedivere
Revolving many memories, till the hull
Look'd one black dot against the verge of dawn,
And on the meer the wailing died away.

Here ended Hall, and our last light, that long
Had wink'd and threaten'd darkness, flared and fell :
At which the Parson, sent to sleep with sound,
And waked with silence, grunted " Good !" but we
Sat rapt : it was the tone with which he read—
Perhaps some modern touches here and there

Redeem'd it from the charge of nothingness—
Or else we loved the man, and prized his work :
I know not : but we sitting, as I said,
The cock crew loud ; as at that time of year
The lusty bird takes every hour for dawn :
Then Francis, muttering, like a man ill-used,
“ There now—that 's nothing ! ” drew a little back.
And drove his heel into the smoulder'd log,
That sent a blast of sparkles up the flue :
And so to bed ; where yet in sleep I seem'd
To sail with Arthur under looming shores,
Point after point, till on to dawn, when dreams
Begin to feel the truth and stir of day,
To me, methought, who waited with a crowd.
There came a bark that, blowing forward, bore
King Arthur, like a modern gentleman
Of stateliest port ; and all the people cried,
“ Arthur is come again : he cannot die.”
Then those that stood upon the hills behind
Repeated—“ Come again, and thrice as fair ; ”
And, further inland, voices echoed—“ Come

With all good things, and war shall be no more.”
At this a hundred bells began to peal,
That with the sound I woke, and heard indeed
The clear church-bells ring in the Christmas morn.

THE GARDENER'S DAUGHTER ;

OR,

THE PICTURES.

THIS morning is the morning of the day.
When I and Eustace from the city went
To see the Gardener's Daughter ; I and he,
Brothers in Art ; a friendship so complete
Portion'd in halves between us, that we grew
The fable of the city where we dwelt.

My Eustace might have sat for Hercules ;
So muscular he spread, so broad of breast.
He, by some law that holds in love, and draws
The greater to the lesser, long desired
A certain miracle of symmetry,
A miniature of loveliness, all grace

Summ'd up and closed in little ;— Juliet, she
So light of foot, so light of spirit—oh, she
To me myself, for some three careless moons,
The summer pilot of an empty heart
Unto the shores of nothing ! Know you not
Such touches are but embassies of love,
To tamper with the feelings, ere he found
Empire for life ? but Eustace painted her,
And said to me, she sitting with us then,
“ When will *you* paint like this ? ” and I replied,
(My words were half in earnest, half in jest,)
“ 'Tis not your work, but Love's. Love, unperceived,
A more ideal Artist he than all,
Came, drew your pencil from you, made those eyes
Darker than darkest pansies, and that hair
More black than ashbuds in the front of March.”
And Juliet answer'd laughing, “ Go and see
The Gardener's daughter : trust me, after that,
You scarce can fail to match his masterpiece.”
And up we rose, and on the spur we went.

Not wholly in the busy world, nor quite
Beyond it, blooms the garden that I love.

News from the humming city comes to it
In sound of funeral or of marriage bells ;
And, sitting muffled in dark leaves, you hear
The windy clanging of the minster clock ;
Although between it and the garden lies
A league of grass, wash'd by a slow broad stream.
That, stirr'd with languid pulses of the oar,
Waves all its lazy lilies, and creeps on,
Barge-laden, to three arches of a bridge
Crown'd with the minster-towers.

The fields between

Are dewy-fresh, brows'd by deep-udder'd kine,
And all about the large lime feathers low,
The lime a summer home of murmurous wings.

In that still place she, hoarded in herself,
Grew, seldom seen : not less among us lived
Her fame from lip to lip. Who had not heard
Of Rose, the Gardener's daughter ? Where was he,
So blunt in memory, so old at heart,
At such a distance from his youth in grief.
That, having seen, forgot ? The common mouth,
So gross to express delight, in praise of her

Grew oratory. Such a lord is Love,
And Beauty such a mistress of the world.

And if I said that Fancy, led by Love,
Would play with flying forms and images,
Yet this is also true, that, long before
I look'd upon her, when I heard her name
My heart was like a prophet to my heart,
And told me I should love. A crowd of hopes,
That sought to sow themselves like winged seeds,
Born out of everything I heard and saw,
Flutter'd about my senses and my soul ;
And vague desires, like fitful blasts of balm
To one that travels quickly, made the air
Of Life delicious, and all kinds of thought,
That verged upon them, sweeter than the dream
Dream'd by a happy man, when the dark East,
Unseen, is brightening to his bridal morn.

And sure this orbit of the memory folds
For ever in itself the day we went
To see her. All the land in flowery squares,
Beneath a broad and equal-blowing wind,
Smelt of the coming summer, as one large cloud

Drew downward : but all else of Heaven was pure
Up to the Sun, and May from verge to verge,
And May with me from head to heel. And now,
As though 'twere yesterday, as though it were
The hour just flown, that morn with all its sound,
(For those old Mays had thrice the life of these,)
Rings in mine ears. The steer forgot to graze,
And, where the hedge-row cuts the pathway, stood,
Leaning his horns into the neighbour field,
And lowing to his fellows. From the woods
Came voices of the well-contented doves.
The lark could scarce get out his notes for joy,
But shook his song together as he near'd
His happy home, the ground. To left and right,
The cuckoo told his name to all the hills ;
The mellow ouzel fluted in the elm ;
The redcap whistled, and the nightingale
Sang loud, as though he were the bird of day.

And Eustace turn'd, and smiling said to me,
“ Hear how the bushes echo ! by my life,
These birds have joyful thoughts. Think you they sing
Like poets, from the vanity of song !

Or have they any sense of why they sing ?
And would they praise the heavens for what they have ? ”
And I made answer, “ Were there nothing else
For which to praise the heavens but only love,
That only love were cause enough for praise.”

Lightly he laugh'd, as one that read my thought,
And on we went ; but ere an hour had pass'd,
We reach'd a meadow slanting to the North ;
Down which a well-worn pathway courted us
To one green wicket in a privet hedge :
This, yielding, gave into a grassy walk
Thro' crowded lilac-ambush trimly pruned ;
And one warm gust, full-fed with perfume, blew
Beyond us, as we enter'd in the cool.
The garden stretches southward. In the midst
A cedar spread his dark-green layers of shade.
The garden-glasses shone, and momentarily
The twinkling laurel scatter'd silver lights.

“ Eustace,” I said, “ this wonder keeps the house.”
He nodded, but a moment afterwards
He cried, “ Look ! look ! ” Before he ceased I turn'd,
And, ere a star can wink, beheld her there.

For up the porch there grew an Eastern rose,
That, flowering high, the last night's gale had caught,
And blown across the walk. One arm aloft—
Gown'd in pure white, that fitted to the shape—
Holding the bush, to fix it back, she stood.
A single stream of all her soft brown hair
Pour'd on one side : the shadow of the flowers
Stole all the golden gloss, and, wavering
Lovingly lower, trembled on her waist—
Ah, happy shade—and still went wavering down,
But, ere it touch'd a foot, that might have danced
The greensward into greener circles, dipt,
And mix'd with shadows of the common ground !
But the full day dwelt on her brows, and sunn'd
Her violet eyes, and all her Hebe-bloom,
And doubled his own warmth against her lips,
And on the bounteous wave of such a breast
As never pencil drew. Half light, half shade,
She stood, a sight to make an old man young.

So rapt, we near'd the house ; but she, a Rose
In roses, mingled with her fragrant toil,
Nor heard us come, nor from her tendance turn'd

Into the world without ; till close at hand,
And almost ere I knew mine own intent,
This murmur broke the stillness of that air
Which brooded round about her :

“ Ah, one rose,
One rose, but one, by those fair fingers cull'd,
Were worth a hundred kisses press'd on lips
Less exquisite than thine.”

She look'd : but all
Suffused with blushes—neither self-possess'd
Nor startled, but betwixt this mood and that,
Divided in a graceful quiet—paused,
And dropt the branch she held, and turning, wound
Her looser hair in braid, and stirr'd her lips
For some sweet answer, though no answer came,
Nor yet refused the rose, but granted it,
And moved away, and left me, statue-like,
In act to render thanks.

I, that whole day,
Saw her no more, although I linger'd there
Till every daisy slept, and Love's white star
Beam'd thro' the thicken'd cedar in the dusk.

So home we went, and all the livelong way
With solemn gibe did Eustace banter me.
“Now,” said he, “will you climb the top of Art.
You cannot fail but work in hues to dim
The Titianic Flora. Will you match
My Juliet ? you, not you,—the Master, Love.
A more ideal Artist he than all.”

So home I went, but could not sleep for joy,
Reading her perfect features in the gloom,
Kissing the rose she gave me o’er and o’er,
And shaping faithful record of the glance
That graced the giving—such a noise of life
Swarm’d in the golden present, such a voice
Call’d to me from the years to come, and such
A length of bright horizon rimm’d the dark.
And all that night I heard the watchmen peal
The sliding season : all that night I heard
The heavy clocks knolling the drowsy hours.
The drowsy hours, dispensers of all good,
O’er the mute city stole with folded wings,
Distilling odours on me as they went
To greet their fairer sisters of the East.

Love at first sight, first-born, and heir to all,
Made this night thus. Henceforward squall nor storm
Could keep me from that Eden where she dwelt.
Light pretexts drew me : sometimes a Dutch love
For tulips ; then for roses, moss or musk,
To grace my city-rooms ; or fruits and cream
Served in the weeping elm ; and more and more
A word could bring the colour to my cheek ;
A thought would fill my eyes with happy dew ;
Love trebled life within me, and with each
The year increased.

The daughters of the year,
One after one, thro' that still garden pass'd :
Each garlanded with her peculiar flower
Danced into light, and died into the shade ;
And each in passing touch'd with some new grace
Or seem'd to touch her, so that day by day,
Like one that never can be wholly known,
Her beauty grew ; till Autumn brought an hour
For Eustace, when I heard his deep " I will,"
Breathed, like the covenant of a God, to hold
From thence thro' all the worlds : but I rose up

Full of his bliss, and following her dark eyes
Felt earth as air beneath me, till I reach'd
The wicket-gate, and found her standing there.

There sat we down upon a garden mound.
Two mutually enfolded ; Love, the third.
Between us, in the circle of his arms
Enwound us both ; and over many a range
Of waning lime the gray cathedral towers,
Across a hazy glimmer of the west,
Reveal'd their shining windows : from them clash'd
The bells ; we listen'd ; with the time we play'd :
We spoke of other things ; we coursed about
The subject most at heart, more near and near.
Like doves about a dovecote, wheeling round
The central wish, until we settled there.

Then, in that time and place, I spoke to her.
Requiring, though I knew it was mine own.
Yet for the pleasure that I took to hear,
Requiring at her hand the greatest gift,
A woman's heart, the heart of her I loved :
And in that time and place she answer'd me,
And in the compass of three little words.

More musical than ever came in one,
The silver fragments of a broken voice,
Made me most happy, lisping "I am thine."

Shall I cease here ? Is this enough to say
That my desire, like all strongest hopes,
By its own energy fulfill'd itself,
Merged in completion ? Would you learn at full
How passion rose thro' circumstantial grades
Beyond all grades develop'd ? and indeed
I had not staid so long to tell you all,
But while I mused came Memory with sad eyes,
Holding the folded annals of my youth ;
And while I mused, Love with knit brows went by,
And with a flying finger swept my lips,
And spake, "Be wise : not easily forgiven
Are those, who setting wide the doors, that bar
The secret bridal chambers of the heart,
Let in the day." Here, then, my words have end.

Yet might I tell of meetings, of farewells—
Of that which came between, more sweet than each,
In whispers, like the whispers of the leaves

That tremble round a nightingale—in sighs
Which perfect Joy, perplex'd for utterance,
Stole from her sister Sorrow. Might I not tell
Of difference, reconcilment, pledges given,
And vows, where there was never need of vows,
And kisses, where the heart on one wild leap
Hung tranced from all pulsation, as above
The heavens between their fairy fleeces pale
Sow'd all their mystic gulfs with fleeting stars ;
Or while the balmy glooming, crescent-lit,
Spread the light haze along the river-shores,
And in the hollows ; or as once we met
Unheedful, though beneath a whispering rain
Night slid down one long stream of sighing wind.
And in her bosom bore the baby, Sleep.

But this whole hour your eyes have been intent
On that veil'd picture—veil'd, for what it holds
May not be dwelt on by the common day.
This prelude has prepared thee. Raise thy soul
Make thine heart ready with thine eyes : the time
Is come to raise the veil.

Behold her there,
As I beheld her ere she knew my heart,
My first, last love ; the idol of my youth,
The darling of my manhood, and, alas !
Now the most blessed memory of mine age.

D O R A.

WITH farmer Allan at the farm abode
William and Dora. William was his son,
And she his niece. He often look'd at them,
And often thought "I'll make them man and wife."
Now Dora felt her uncle's will in all,
And yearn'd towards William ; but the youth, because
He had been always with her in the house,
Thought not of Dora.

Then there came a day
When Allan call'd his son, and said, " My son :
I married late, but I would wish to see
My grandchild on my knees before I die :
And I have set my heart upon a match.

Now therefore look to Dora ; she is well
To look to ; thrifty too beyond her age.
She is my brother's daughter : he and I
Had once hard words, and parted, and he died
In foreign lands ; but for his sake I bred
His daughter Dora : take her for your wife ;
For I have wish'd this marriage, night and day,
For many years." But William answer'd short ;
" I cannot marry Dora ; by my life,
I will not marry Dora." Then the old man
Was wroth, and doubled up his hands, and said :
" You will not, boy ! you dare to answer thus !
But in my time a father's word was law,
And so it shall be now for me. Look to't ;
Consider, William : take a month to think,
And let me have an answer to my wish ;
Or, by the Lord that made me, you shall pack,
And nevermore darken my doors again."
But William answer'd madly ; bit his lips,
And broke away. The more he look'd at her
The less he liked her ; and his ways were harsh ;
But Dora bore them meekly. Then before

The month was out he left his father's house,
And hired himself to work within the fields ;
And half in love, half spite, he woo'd and wed
A labourer's daughter, Mary Morrison.

Then, when the bells were ringing, Allan call'd
His niece and said : " My girl, I love you well ;
But if you speak with him that was my son,
Or change a word with her he calls his wife,
My home is none of yours. My will is law."
And Dora promised, being meek. She thought,
" It cannot be : my uncle's mind will change !"

And days went on, and there was born a boy
To William ; then distresses came on him ;
And day by day he pass'd his father's gate,
Heart-broken, and his father help'd him not.
But Dora stored what little she could save,
And sent it them by stealth, nor did they know
Who sent it ; till at last a fever seized
On William, and in harvest time he died.

Then Dora went to Mary. Mary sat
And look'd with tears upon her boy, and thought
Hard things of Dora. Dora came and said :

“I have obey’d my uncle until now,
And I have sinn’d, for it was all thro’ me
This evil came on William at the first.
But, Mary, for the sake of him that’s gone,
And for your sake, the woman that he chose,
And for this orphan, I am come to you :
You know there has not been for these five years
So full a harvest : let me take the boy,
And I will set him in my uncle’s eye
Among the wheat ; that when his heart is glad
Of the full harvest, he may see the boy,
And bless him for the sake of him that’s gone.”

And Dora took the child, and went her way
Across the wheat, and sat upon a mound
That was unsown, where many poppies grew.
Far off the farmer came into the field
And spied her not ; for none of all his men
Dare tell him Dora waited with the child ;
And Dora would have risen and gone to him,
But her heart fail’d her ; and the reapers reap’d,
And the sun fell, and all the land was dark.

But when the morrow came, she rose and took

The child once more, and sat upon the mound ;
And made a little wreath of all the flowers
That grew about, and tied it round his hat
To make him pleasing in her uncle's eye.
Then when the farmer pass'd into the field
He spied her, and he left his men at work,
And came and said ; " Where were you yesterday ?
Whose child is that ? What are you doing here ?"
So Dora cast her eyes upon the ground,
And answer'd softly, " This is William's child !"
" And did I not," said Allan, " did I not
Forbid you, Dora ?" Dora said again ;
" Do with me as you will, but take the child
And bless him for the sake of him that's gone !"
And Allan said, " I see it is a trick
Got up betwixt you and the woman there.
I must be taught my duty, and by you !
You knew my word was law, and yet you dared
To slight it. Well—for I will take the boy ;
But go you hence, and never see me more."

So saying, he took the boy, that cried aloud
And struggled hard. The wreath of flowers fell

At Dora's feet. She bow'd upon her hands,
And the boy's cry came to her from the field,
More and more distant. She bow'd down her head,
Remembering the day when first she came,
And all the things that had been. She bow'd down
And wept in secret ; and the reapers reap'd,
And the sun fell, and all the land was dark.

Then Dora went to Mary's house, and stood
Upon the threshold. Mary saw the boy
Was not with Dora. She broke out in praise
To God, that help'd her in her widowhood.
And Dora said, " My uncle took the boy ;
But, Mary, let me live and work with you :
He says that he will never see me more."
Then answer'd Mary, " This shall never be,
That thou shouldst take my trouble on thyself :
And, now I think, he shall not have the boy,
For he will teach him hardness, and to slight
His mother ; therefore thou and I will go,
And I will have my boy, and bring him home ;
And I will beg of him to take thee back ;
But if he will not take thee back again,

Then thou and I will live within one house,
And work for William's child, until he grows
Of age to help us."

So the women kiss'd
Each other, and set out, and reach'd the farm.
The door was off the latch ; they peep'd, and saw
The boy set up betwixt his grandsire's knees,
Who thrust him in the hollows of his arm,
And clapt him on the hands and on the cheeks,
Like one that loved him ; and the lad stretch'd out
And babbled for the golden seal, that hung
From Allan's watch, and sparkled by the fire.
Then they came in : but when the boy beheld
His mother, he cried out to come to her ;
And Allan set him down ; and Mary said :

“ O Father !—if you let me call you so—
I never came a-begging for myself,
Or William, or this child ; but now I come
For Dora : take her back ; she loves you well.
O Sir, when William died, he died at peace
With all men ; for I ask'd him, and he said,
He could not ever rue his marrying me

I had been a patient wife : but, Sir, he said
That he was wrong to cross his father thus :
‘ God bless him !’ he said, ‘ and may he never know
The troubles I have gone thro’ !’ Then he turn’d
His face and pass’d—unhappy that I am !
But now, Sir, let me have my boy, for you
Will make him hard, and he will learn to slight
His father’s memory ; and take Dora back,
And let all this be as it was before.”

So Mary said, and Dora hid her face
By Mary. There was silence in the room ;
And all at once the old man burst in sobs :—

“I have been to blame—to blame. I have kill’d my son.
I have kill’d him—but I loved him—my dear son.
May God forgive me !—I have been to blame.
Kiss me, my children.”

Then they clung about
The old man’s neck, and kiss’d him many times.
And all the man was broken with remorse ;
And all his love came back a hundredfold ;
And for three hours he sobb’d o’er William’s child,
Thinking of William.

So those four abode
Within one house together ; and as years
Went forward, Mary took another mate ;
But Dora lived unmarried till her death.

AUDLEY COURT.

“THE Bull, the Fleece are cramm’d, and not a room
For love or money. Let us picnic there
At Audley Court.”

I spoke, while Audley feast
Humm’d like a hive all round the narrow quay,
To Francis, with a basket on his arm,
To Francis just alighted from the boat,
And breathing of the sea. “With all my heart,”
Said Francis. Then we shoulder’d through the swarm,
And rounded by the stillness of the beach
To where the bay runs up its latest horn.

We left the dying ebb that faintly lipp’d
The flat red granite ; so by many a sweep

Of meadow smooth from aftermath we reach'd
The griffin-guarded gates, and pass'd thro' all
The pillar'd dusk of sounding sycamores,
And cross'd the garden to the gardener's lodge,
With all its casements bedded, and its walls
And chimneys muffled in the leafy vine.

There, on a slope of orchard, Francis laid
A damask napkin wrought with horse and hound,
Brought out a dusky loaf that smelt of home,
And, half-cut-down, a pasty costly-made,
Where quail and pigeon, lark and leveret, lay,
Like fossils of the rock, with golden yolks
Imbedded and injellied ; last, with these,
A flask of cider from his father's vats,
Prime, which I knew ; and so we sat and eat
And talk'd old matters over : who was dead,
Who married, who was like to be, and how
The races went, and who would rent the hall :
Then touch'd upon the game, how scarce it was
This season ; glancing thence, discuss'd the farm,
The fourfield system, and the price of grain ;
And struck upon the corn-laws, where we split,

And came again together on the king
With heated faces ; till he laugh'd aloud ;
And, while the blackbird on the pippin hung
To hear him, clapt his hand in mine and sang —

“ Oh ! who would fight and march and countermarch,
Be shot for sixpence in a battle-field,
And shovell'd up into a bloody trench
Where no one knows ? but let me live my life.

“ Oh ! who would cast and balance at a desk,
Perch'd like a crow upon a three-legg'd stool,
Till all his juice is dried, and all his joints
Are full of chalk ? but let me live my life.

“ Who'd serve the state ? for if I carved my name
Upon the cliffs that guard my native land,
I might as well have traced it in the sands ;
The sea wastes all : but let me live my life.

“ Oh ! who would love ? I woo'd a woman once,
But she was sharper than an eastern wind,
And all my heart turn'd from her, as a thorn
Turns from the sea : but let me live my life.”

He sang his song, and I replied with mine :
I found it in a volume, all of songs,

Knock'd down to me, when old Sir Robert's pride.
His books—the more the pity, so I said—
Came to the hammer here in March—and this—
I set the words, and added names I knew.

“Sleep, Ellen Aubrey, sleep, and dream of me :
Sleep, Ellen, folded in thy sister's arm,
And sleeping, haply dream her arm is mine.

“Sleep, Ellen, folded in Emilia's arm ;
Emilia, fairer than all else but thou,
For thou art fairer than all else that is.

“Sleep, breathing health and peace upon her breast :
Sleep, breathing love and trust against her lip :
I go to-night : I come to-morrow morn.

“I go, but I return : I would I were
The pilot of the darkness and the dream.
Sleep, Ellen Aubrey, love, and dream of me.”

So sang we each to either, Francis Hale,
The farmer's son who lived across the bay,
My friend ; and I, that having wherewithal,
And in the fallow leisure of my life,
Did what I would ; but ere the night we rose
And saunter'd home beneath a moon, that, just

In crescent, dimly rain'd about the leaf
Twilights of airy silver, till we reach'd
The limit of the hills ; and as we sank
From rock to rock upon the glooming quay,
The town was hush'd beneath us : lower down
The bay was oily-calm ; the harbour-buoy
With one green sparkle ever and anon
Dipt by itself, and we were glad at heart.

WALKING TO THE MAIL.

John. I'm glad I walk'd. How fresh the meadows look
Above the river, and, but a month ago,
The whole hill-side was redder than a fox.
Is yon plantation where this byway joins
The turnpike ?

James. Yes.

John. And when does this come by ?

James. The mail ? At one o'clock.

John. What is it now ?

James. A quarter to.

John. Whose house is that I see
Beyond the watermills ?

James. Sir Edward Head's :
But he 's abroad : the place is to be sold.

John. Oh, his. He was not broken.

James. No, sir, he,
Vex'd with a morbid devil in his blood
That veil'd the world with jaundice, hid his face
From all men, and commercing with himself,
He lost the sense that handles daily life—
That keeps us all in order more or less—
And sick of home went overseas for change.

John. And whither ?

James. Nay, who knows ? he's here and there.
But let him go ; his devil goes with him,
As well as with his tenant, Jocky Dawes.

John. What 's that ?

James. You saw the man but yesterday :
He pick'd the pebble from your horse's foot.
His house was haunted by a jolly ghost
That rummaged like a rat. No servant staid :
The farmer vext packs up his beds and chairs,
And all his household stuff ; and with his boy
Betwixt his knees, his wife upon the tilt,
Sets forth, and meets a friend who hails him, " What !
You 're flitting ! " " Yes, we 're flitting," says the ghost,
(For they had pack'd the thing among the beds,)

“ Oh well,” says he, “ you flitting with us too—
Jack, turn the horses’ heads and home again.”

John. He left *his* wife behind ; for so I heard.

James. He left her, yes. I met my lady once :
A woman like a butt, and harsh as crabs.

John. Oh yet but I remember, ten years back—
'Tis now at least ten years—and then she was—
You could not light upon a sweeter thing :
A body slight and round, and like a pear
In growing, modest eyes, a hand, a foot
Lessening in perfect cadence, and a skin
As clean and white as privet when it flowers.

James. Ay, ay, the blossom fades, and they that loved
At first like dove and dove were cat and dog.
She was the daughter of a cottager,
Out of her sphere. What betwixt shame and pride,
New things and old, himself and her, she sour'd
To what she is : a nature never kind !
Like men, like manners : like breeds like, they say.
Kind nature is the best : those manners next
That fit us like a nature second-hand ;
Which are indeed the manners of the great.

John. But I had heard it was this bill that past,
And fear of change at home, that drove him hence.

James. That was the last drop in the cup of gall.
I once was near him, when his bailiff brought
A Chartist pike. You should have seen him wince
As from a venomous thing : he thought himself
A mark for all, and shudder'd, lest a cry
Should break his sleep by night, and his nice eyes
Should see the raw mechanic's bloody thumbs
Sweat on his blazon'd chairs ; but, sir, you know
That these two parties still divide the world—
Of those that want, and those that have : and still
The same old sore breaks out from age to age
With much the same result. Now I, that am
A Tory to the quick, was as a boy
Destructive, when I had not what I would.
I was at school—a college in the South :
There lived a flayflint near ; we stole his fruit,
His hens, his eggs ; but there was law for *us* ;
We paid in person. He had a sow, sir. She,
With meditative grunts of much content,
Lay great with pig, wallowing in sun and mud.

By night we dragg'd her to the college tower
From her warm bed, and up the corkscrew stair
With hand and rope we haled the groaning sow,
And on the leads we kept her till she pigg'd.
Large range of prospect had the mother sow,
And but for daily loss of one she loved.
As one by one we took them—but for this—
As never sow was higher in this world—
Might have been happy : but what lot is pure ?
We took them all, till she was left alone
Upon her tower, the Niobe of swine,
And so return'd unfarrow'd to her sty.

John. They found you out ?

James. Not they.

John. Well—after all—

What know we of the secret of a man ?
His nerves were wrong. What ails us, who are sound,
That we should mimic this raw fool the world,
Which charts us all in its coarse blacks or whites.
As ruthless as a baby with a worm,
As cruel as a schoolboy ere he grows
To Pity—more from ignorance than will.

But put your best foot forward, or I fear
That we shall miss the mail : and here it comes
With five at top : as quaint a four-in-hand
As you shall see—three pyebalds and a roan.

ST. SIMEON STYLITES.

ALTHO' I be the basest of mankind,
From scalp to sole one slough and crust of sin,
Unfit for earth, unfit for heaven, scarce meet
For troops of devils, mad with blasphemy,
I will not cease to grasp the hope I hold
Of saintdom, and to clamour, mourn and sob,
Battering the gates of heaven with storms of prayer.
Have mercy, Lord, and take away my sin.

Let this avail, just, dreadful, mighty God,
This not be all in vain, that thrice ten years,
Thrice multiplied by superhuman pangs,
In hungers and in thirsts, fevers and cold,
In coughs, aches, stitches, ulcerous throes and cramps,

A sign betwixt the meadow and the cloud,
Patient on this tall pillar I have borne
Rain, wind, frost, heat, hail, damp, and sleet, and snow ;
And I had hoped that ere this period closed
Thou wouldst have caught me up into thy rest,
Denying not these weather-beaten limbs
The meed of saints, the white robe and the palm.

O take the meaning, Lord : I do not breathe,
Not whisper, any murmur of complaint.
Pain heap'd ten-hundred-fold to this, were still
Less burthen, by ten-hundred-fold, to bear,
Than were those lead-like tons of sin, that crush'd
My spirit flat before thee.

O Lord, Lord,
Thou knowest I bore this better at the first,
For I was strong and hale of body then ;
And though my teeth, which now are dropt away,
Would chatter with the cold, and all my beard
Was tagg'd with icy fringes in the moon,
I drown'd the whoopings of the owl with sound
Of pious hymns and psalms, and sometimes saw
An angel stand and watch me, as I sang.

Now am I feeble grown : my end draws nigh—
I hope my end draws nigh : half deaf I am,
So that I scarce can hear the people hum
About the column's base, and almost blind,
And scarce can recognise the fields I know.
And both my thighs are rotted with the dew.
Yet cease I not to clamour and to cry,
While my stiff spine can hold my weary head,
Till all my limbs drop piecemeal from the stone,
Have mercy, mercy : take away my sin.

O Jesus, if thou wilt not save my soul,
Who may be saved ? who is it may be saved ?
Who may be made a saint, if I fail here ?
Show me the man hath suffer'd more than I.
For did not all thy martyrs die one death ?
For either they were stoned, or crucified,
Or burn'd in fire, or boil'd in oil, or sawn
In twain beneath the ribs ; but I die here
To-day, and whole years long, a life of death.
Bear witness, if I could have found a way
(And heedfully I sifted all my thought)
More slowly-painful to subdue this home

Of sin, my flesh, which I despise and hate,
I had not stinted practice, O my God.

For not alone this pillar-punishment,
Not this alone I bore : but while I lived
In the white convent down the valley there,
For many weeks about my loins I wore
The rope that haled the buckets from the well,
Twisted as tight as I could knot the noose ;
And spake not of it to a single soul,
Until the ulcer, eating through my skin,
Betray'd my secret penance, so that all
My brethren marvell'd greatly. More than this
I bore, whereof, O God, thou knowest all.

Three winters, that my soul might grow to thee,
I lived up there on yonder mountain side.
My right leg chain'd into the crag, I lay
Pent in a roofless close of ragged stones ;
Inswath'd sometimes in wandering mist, and twice
Black'd with thy branding thunder, and sometimes
Sucking the damps for drink, and eating not,
Except the spare chance-gift of those that came
To touch my body and be heal'd, and live :

And they say then that I work'd miracles,
Whereof my fame is loud amongst mankind,
Cured lameness, palsies, cancers. Thou, O God,
Knowest alone whether this was or no.
Have mercy, mercy ; cover all my sin.

Then, that I might be more alone with thee.
Three years I lived upon a pillar, high
Six cubits, and three years on one of twelve ;
And twice three years I crouch'd on one that rose
Twenty by measure ; last of all, I grew
Twice ten long weary weary years to this,
That numbers forty cubits from the soil.

I think that I have borne as much as this—
Or else I dream—and for so long a time,
If I may measure time by yon slow light,
And this high dial, which my sorrow crowns—
So much—even so.

And yet I know not well,
For that the evil ones come here, and say,
“ Fall down, O Simeon : thou hast suffer'd long
For ages and for ages ! ” then they prate
Of penances I cannot have gone thro',

Perplexing me with lies ; and oft I fall,
Maybe for months, in such blind lethargies,
That Heaven, and Earth, and Time are choked.

But yet

Bethink thee, Lord, while thou and all the saints
Enjoy themselves in heaven, and men on earth
House in the shade of comfortable roofs,
Sit with their wives by fires, eat wholesome food,
And wear warm clothes, and even beasts have stalls,
I, 'tween the spring and downfall of the light,
Bow down one thousand and two hundred times,
To Christ, the Virgin Mother, and the Saints ;
Or in the night, after a little sleep,
I wake : the chill stars sparkle ; I am wet
With drenching dews, or stiff with crackling frost.
I wear an undress'd goatskin on my back ;
A grazing iron collar grinds my neck ;
And in my weak, lean arms I lift the cross,
And strive and wrestle with thee till I die :
O mercy, mercy ! wash away my sin.

O Lord, thou knowest what a man I am ;
A sinful man, conceived and born in sin :

'Tis their own doing ; this is none of mine ;
Lay it not to me. Am I to blame for this,
That here come those that worship me ? Ha ! ha !
They think that I am somewhat. What am I ?
The silly people take me for a saint,
And bring me offerings of fruit and flowers :
And I, in truth (thou wilt bear witness here)
Have all in all endured as much, and more
Than many just and holy men, whose names
Are register'd and calendar'd for saints.

Good people, you do ill to kneel to me.
What is it I can have done to merit this ?
I am a sinner viler than you all.
It may be I have wrought some miracles,
And cured some halt and main'd ; but what of that ?
It may be, no one, even among the saints,
May match his pains with mine. But what of that ?
Yet do not rise : for you may look on me,
And in your looking you may kneel to God.
Speak ! is there any of you halt or main'd ?
I think you know I have some power with Heaven
From my long penance : let him speak his wish.

Yes, I can heal him. Power goes forth from me.
They say that they are heal'd. Ah, hark ! they shout
" St. Simeon Stylites." Why, if so,
God reaps a harvest in me. O my soul,
God reaps a harvest in thee. If this be,
Can I work miracles and not be saved ?
This is not told of any. They were saints.
It cannot be but that I shall be saved ;
Yea, crown'd a saint. They shout, " Behold a saint !"
And lower voices saint me from above.
Courage, St. Simeon ! This dull chrysalis
Cracks into shining wings, and hope ere death
Spreads more and more and more, that God hath now
Sponged and made blank of crimeful record all
My mortal archives.

O my sons, my sons,
I, Simeon of the pillar, by surname
Stylites, among men ; I, Simeon,
The watcher on the column till the end ;
I, Simeon, whose brain the sunshine bakes ;
I, whose bald brows in silent hours become
Unnaturally hoar with rime, do now

From my high nest of penance here proclaim
That Pontius and Iscariot by my side
Show'd like fair seraphs. On the coals I lay,
A vessel full of sin : all hell beneath
Made me boil over. Devils pluck'd my sleeve ;
Abaddon and Asmodeus caught at me.
I smote them with the cross ; they swarm'd again.
In bed like monstrous apes they crush'd my chest.
They flapp'd my light out as I read : I saw
Their faces grow between me and my book :
With colt-like whinny and with hoggish whine
They burst my prayer. Yet this way was left
And by this way I 'scaped them. Mortify
Your flesh, like me, with scourges and with thorns ;
Smite, shrink not, spare not. If it may be, fast
Whole Lents, and pray. I hardly, with slow steps—
With slow, faint steps, and much exceeding pain—
Have scrambled past those pits of fire, that still
Sing in mine ears. But yield not me the praise :
God only thro' his bounty hath thought fit
Among the powers and princes of this world,
To make me an example to mankind,

Which few can reach to. Yet I do not say
But that a time may come—yea, even now,
Now, now, his footsteps smite the threshold stairs
Of life—I say, that time is at the doors
When you may worship me without reproach ;
For I will leave my relics in your land,
And you may carve a shrine about my dust,
And burn a fragrant lamp before my bones,
When I am gather'd to the glorious saints.

While I spake then, a sting of shrewdest pain
Ran shrivelling thro' me, and a cloudblike change,
In passing, with a grosser film made thick
These heavy, horny eyes. The end ! the end !
Surely the end ! What's here ? a shape, a shade,
A flash of light. Is that the angel there
That holds a crown ? Come, blessed brother, come.
I know thy glittering face. I waited long ;
My brows are ready. What ! deny it now ?
Nay, draw, draw, draw nigh. So I clutch it. Christ !
'Tis gone : 'tis here again ; the crown ! the crown !
So now 'tis fitted on and grows to me,
And from it melt the dews of Paradise,

Sweet ! sweet ! spikenard, and balm, and frankincense.

Ah ! let me not be fool'd, sweet saints : I trust
That I am whole, and clean, and meet for Heaven.

Speak, if there be a priest, a man of God,
Among you there, and let him presently
Approach, and lean a ladder on the shaft.
And climbing up into mine airy home.
Deliver me the blessed sacrament :
For by the warning of the Holy Ghost,
I prophesy that I shall die to-night,
A quarter before twelve.

But thou, O Lord.

Aid all this foolish people ; let them take
Example, pattern : lead them to thy light.

THE TALKING OAK.



I.

ONCE more the gate behind me falls ;
Once more before my face
I see the moulder'd Abbey-walls,
That stand within the chace.

II.

Beyond the lodge the city lies,
Beneath its drift of smoke ;
And ah ! with what delighted eyes
I turn to yonder oak.

III.

For when my passion first began,
Ere that, which in me burn'd,
The love, that makes me thrice a man,
Could hope itself return'd ;

IV.

To yonder oak within the field
I spoke without restraint,
And with a larger faith appeal'd
Than Papist unto Saint.

V.

For oft I talk'd with him apart.
And told him of my choice.
Until he plagiarised a heart,
And answer'd with a voice.

VI.

Tho' what he whisper'd under Heaven
None else could understand ;
I found him garrulously given,
A babbler in the land.

VII.

But since I heard him make reply
Is many a weary hour ;
'Twere well to question him, and try
If yet he keeps the power.

VIII.

Hail, hidden to the knees in fern,
Broad Oak of Sumner-chace,
Whose topmost branches can discern
The roofs of Sumner-place !

IX.

Say thou, whereon I carved her name,
If ever maid or spouse,
As fair as my Olivia, came
To rest beneath thy boughs.—

X.

“ O Walter, I have shelter'd here
Whatever maiden grace
The good old Summers, year by year.
Made ripe in Sumner-chace :

XI.

“ Old Summers, when the monk was fat,
And, issuing shorn and sleek,
Would twist his girdle tight, and pat
The girls upon the cheek,

XII.

“ Ere yet, in scorn of Peter’s-pence.
And number’d bead, and shrift,
Bluff Harry broke into the spence,
And turn’d the cowls adrift :

XIII.

“ And I have seen some score of those
Fresh faces, that would thrive
When his man-minded offset rose
To chase the deer at five ;

XIV.

“ And all that from the town would stroll,
Till that wild wind made work
In which the gloomy brewer’s soul
Went by me, like a stork :

XV.

“ The slight she-slips of loyal blood.
And others, passing praise.
Strait-laced, but all-too-full in bud
For puritanic stays :

XVI.

“ And I have shadow’d many a group
Of beauties, that were born
In teacup-times of hood and hoop,
Or while the patch was worn ;

XVII.

“ And, leg and arm with love-knots gay,
About me leap’d and laugh’d
The modish Cupid of the day,
And shrill’d his tinsel shaft.

XVIII.

“ I swear (and else may insects prick
Each leaf into a gall)
This girl, for whom your heart is sick,
Is three times worth them all ;

XIX.

“ For those and theirs, by Nature’s law,
Have faded long ago ;
But in these latter springs I saw
Your own Olivia blow,

XX.

“ From when she gamboll’d on the greens,
A baby-germ, to when
The maiden blossoms of her teens
Could number five from ten.

XXI.

“ I swear, by leaf, and wind, and rain.
(And hear me with thine ears.)
That, tho’ I circle in the grain
Five hundred rings of years—

XXII.

“ Yet, since I first could cast a shade,
Did never creature pass
So slightly, musically made,
So light upon the grass :

XXIII.

“ For as to fairies, that will flit
To make the greensward fresh,
I hold them exquisitely knit,
But far too spare of flesh.”

XXIV.

Oh, hide thy knotted knees in fern,
And overlook the chace ;
And from thy topmost branch discern
The roofs of Sumner-place.

XXV.

But thou, whereon I carved her name,
That oft hast heard my vows,
Declare when last Olivia came
To sport beneath thy boughs.

XXVI.

“ O yesterday, you know, the fair
Was holden at the town ;
Her father left his good arm-chair,
And rode his hunter down.

XXVII.

“ And with him Albert came on his.
I look'd at him with joy :
As cowslip unto oxlip is,
So seems she to the boy.

XXVIII.

“ An hour had past—and, sitting straight
 Within the low-wheel'd chaise,
Her mother trundled to the gate
 Behind the dappled grays.

XXIX.

“ But, as for her, she staid at home,
 And on the roof she went,
And down the way you use to come
 She look'd with discontent.

XXX.

“ She left the novel half-uncut
 Upon the rosewood shelf ;
She left the new piano shut :
 She could not please herself.

XXXI.

“ Then ran she, gamesome as the colt,
 And livelier than a lark
She sent her voice through all the holt
 Before her, and the park.

XXXII.

“ A light wind chased her on the wing,
And in the chase grew wild,
As close as might be would he cling
About the darling child :

XXXIII.

“ But light as any wind that blows
So fleetly did she stir,
The flower, she touch'd on, dipt and rose,
And turn'd to look at her.

XXXIV.

“ And here she came, and round me play'd.
And sang to me the whole
Of those three stanzas that you made
About my ‘ giant bole ;’

XXXV.

“ And in a fit of frolic mirth
She strove to span my waist :
Alas, I was so broad of girth,
I could not be embraced.

XXXVI.

“ I wish’d myself the fair young beech
That here beside me stands,
That round me, clasping each in each,
She might have lock’d her hands.

XXXVII.

“ Yet seem’d the pressure thrice as sweet
As woodbine’s fragile hold,
Or when I feel about my feet
The berried briony fold.”

XXXVIII.

O muffle round thy knees with fern,
And shadow Sumner-chace !
Long may thy topmost branch discern
The roofs of Sumner-place !

XXXIX.

But tell me, did she read the name
I carved with many vows
When last with throbbing heart I came
To rest beneath thy boughs ?

XL.

“ O yes, she wander’d round and round
 These knotted knees of mine,
And found, and kiss’d the name she found,
 And sweetly murmur’d thine.

XLI.

“ A teardrop trembled from its source,
 And down my surface crept.
My sense of touch is something coarse,
 But I believe she wept.

XLII.

“ Then flush’d her cheek with rosy light,
 She glanced across the plain ;
But not a creature was in sight :
 She kiss’d me once again.

XLIII.

“ Her kisses were so close and kind,
 That, trust me on my word,
Hard wood I am, and wrinkled rind,
 But yet my sap was stirr’d :

XLIV.

“ And even into my inmost ring
A pleasure I discern’d,
Like those blind motions of the Spring,
That show the year is turn’d.

XLV.

“ Thrice-happy he that may caress
The ringlet’s waving balm—
The cushions of whose touch may press
The maiden’s tender palm.

XLVI.

“ I, rooted here among the groves,
But languidly adjust
My vapid vegetable loves
With anthers and with dust :

XLVII.

“ For ah ! the Dryad-days were brief
Whereof the poets talk,
When that, which breathes within the leaf,
Could slip its bark and walk.

XLVIII.

“ But could I, as in times foregone,
From spray, and branch, and stem,
Have suck’d and gather’d into one
The life that spreads in them,

XLIX.

“ She had not found me so remiss ;
But lightly issuing thro’,
I would have paid her kiss for kiss
With usury thereto.”

L.

O flourish high, with leafy towers,
And overlook the lea,
Pursue thy loves among the bowers,
But leave thou mine to me.

LI.

O flourish, hidden deep in fern,
Old oak, I love thee well ;
A thousand thanks for what I learn
And what remains to tell.

LII.

“ ’Tis little more : the day was warm ;
At last, tired out with play,
She sank her head upon her arm.
And at my feet she lay.

LIII.

“ Her eyelids dropp’d their silken eaves.
I breathed upon her eyes
Thro’ all the summer of my leaves
A welcome mix’d with sighs.

LIV.

“ I took the swarming sound of life—
The music from the town—
The whispers of the drum and fife,
And lull’d them in my own.

LV.

“ Sometimes I let a sunbeam slip
To light her shaded eye ;
A second flutter’d round her lip
Like a golden butterfly ;

LVI.

“ A third would glimmer on her neck
To make the necklace shine ;
Another slid, a sunny fleck,
From head to ankle fine.

LVII.

“ Then close and dark my arms I spread,
And shadow'd all her rest—
Dropt dews upon her golden head,
An acorn in her breast.

LVIII.

“ But in a pet she started up,
And pluck'd it out, and drew
My little oakling from the cup,
And flung him in the dew.

LIX.

“ And yet it was a graceful gift—
I felt a pang within
As when I see the woodman lift
His axe to slay my kin.

LX.

“ I shook him down because he was
The finest on the tree.
He lies beside thee on the grass.
O kiss him once for me.

LXI.

“ O kiss him twice and thrice for me,
That have no lips to kiss,
For never yet was oak on lea
Shall grow so fair as this.”

LXII.

Step deeper yet in herb and fern.
Look further thro' the chace,
Spread upward till thy boughs discern
The front of Sumner-place.

LXIII.

This fruit of thine by Love is blest.
That but a moment lay
Where fairer fruit of Love may rest
Some happy future day.

LXIV.

I kiss it twice, I kiss it thrice,
The warmth it thence shall win
To riper life may magnetise
The baby-oak within.

LXV.

But thou, while kingdoms overset,
Or lapse from hand to hand,
Thy leaf shall never fail, nor yet
Thine acorn in the land.

LXVI.

May never saw dismember thee,
Nor wielded axe disjoint,
That art the fairest-spoken tree
From here to Lizard-point.

LXVII.

O rock upon thy towery top
All throats that gurgle sweet !
All starry culmination drop
Balm-dews to bathe thy feet !

LXVIII.

All grass of silky feather grow—
And while he sinks or swells
The full south-breeze around thee blow
The sound of minster bells.

LXIX.

The fat earth feed thy branchy root,
That under deeply strikes !
The northern morning o'er thee shoot,
High up, in silver spikes !

LXX.

Nor ever lightning char thy grain,
But, rolling as in sleep,
Low thunders bring the mellow rain,
That makes thee broad and deep !

LXXI.

And hear me swear a solemn oath,
That only by thy side
Will I to Olive plight my troth,
And gain her for my bride.

LXXII.

And when my marriage-morn may fall,
She, Dryad-like, shall wear
Alternate leaf and acorn-ball
In wreath about her hair.

LXXIII.

And I will work in prose and rhyme,
And praise thee more in both
Than bard has honour'd beech or lime,
Or that Thessalian growth,

LXXIV.

In which the swarthy ringdove sat,
And mystic sentence spoke ;
And more than England honours that,
Thy famous brother-oak,

LXXV.

Wherein the younger Charles abode
Till all the paths were dim,
And far below the Roundhead rode,
And humm'd a surly hymn.

LOVE AND DUTY.

OF love that never found his earthly close,
What sequel ? Streaming eyes and breaking hearts ?
Or all the same as if he had not been ?

Not so. Shall Error in the round of time
Still father Truth ? O shall the braggart shout
For some blind glimpse of freedom work itself
Thro' madness, hated by the wise, to law
System and empire ? Sin itself be found
The cloudy porch oft opening on the Sun ?
And only he, this wonder, dead, become
Mere highway dust ? or year by year alone
Sit brooding in the ruins of a life,
Nightmare of youth, the spectre of himself ?

If this were thus, if this, indeed, were all.
Better the narrow brain, the stony heart,

The staring eye glazed o'er with sapless days,
The long mechanic pacings to and fro,
The set gray life, and apathetic end.
But am I not the nobler thro' thy love ?
O three times less unworthy ! likewise thou
Art more thro' Love, and greater than thy years.
The Sun will run his orbit, and the Moon
Her circle. Wait, and Love himself will bring
The drooping flower of knowledge changed to fruit
Of wisdom. Wait : my faith is large in Time,
And that which shapes it to some perfect end.

Will some one say, then why not ill for good ?
Why took ye not your pastime ? To that man
My work shall answer, since I knew the right
And did it ; for a man is not as God,
But then most Godlike being most a man.

—So let me think 'tis well for thee and me—
Ill-fated that I am, what lot is mine
Whose foresight preaches peace, my heart so slow
To feel it ! for how hard it seem'd to me,
When eyes, love-languid thro' half-tears, would dwell
One earnest, earnest moment upon mine,

Then not to dare to see ! when thy low voice,
Faltering, would break its syllables, to keep
My own full-tuned,—hold passion in a leash,
And not leap forth and fall about thy neck,
And on thy bosom, (deep-desired relief!)
Rain out the heavy mist of tears, that weigh'd
Upon my brain, my senses and my soul !

For Love himself took part against himself
To warn us off, and Duty loved of Love—
O this world's curse,—beloved but hated—came
Like Death betwixt thy dear embrace and mine,
And crying, “ Who is this ? behold thy bride,”
She push'd me from thee.

If the sense is hard
To alien ears, I did not speak to these—
No, not to thee, but to thyself in me :
Hard is my doom and thine : thou knowest it all.

Could Love part thus ? was it not well to speak,
To have spoken once ? It could not but be well.
The slow sweet hours that bring us all things good,
The slow sad hours that bring us all things ill,
And all good things from evil, brought the night

In which we sat together and alone,
And to the want, that hollow'd all the heart,
Gave utterance by the yearning of an eye,
That burn'd upon its object thro' such tears
As flow but once a life.

The trance gave way

To those caresses, when a hundred times
In that last kiss, which never was the last,
Farewell, like endless welcome, lived and died.
Then follow'd counsel, comfort, and the words
That make a man feel strong in speaking truth ;
Till now the dark was worn, and overhead
The lights of sunset and of sunrise mix'd
In that brief night ; the summer night, that paused
Among her stars to hear us ; stars that hung
Love-charm'd to listen : all the wheels of Time
Spun round in station, but the end had come.

O then like those, that clench their nerves to rush
Upon their dissolution, we two rose,
There—closing like an individual life—
In one blind cry of passion and of pain,
Like bitter accusation ev'n to death,

Caught up the whole of love and utter'd it,
And bade adieu for ever.

Live—yet live—

Shall sharpest pathos blight us, knowing all
Life needs for life is possible to will—
Live happy ! tend thy flowers : be tended by
My blessing ! should my shadow cross thy thoughts
Too sadly for their peace, so put it back
For calmer hours in memory's darkest hold,
If unforgotten ! should it cross thy dreams,
So might it come like one that looks content,
With quiet eyes unfaithful to the truth,
And point thee forward to a distant light,
Or seem to lift a burthen from thy heart
And leave thee freër, till thou wake refresh'd.
Then when the first low matin-chirp hath grown
Full quire, and morning driv'n her plow of pearl
Far furrowing into light the mounded rack,
Beyond the fair green field and eastern sea.

ULYSSES.

Ir little profits that an idle king,
By this still hearth, among these barren crags,
Match'd with an aged wife, I mete and dole
Unequal laws unto a savage race,
That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me.
I cannot rest from travel : I will drink
Life to the lees : all times I have enjoy'd
Greatly, have suffer'd greatly, both with those
That loved me, and alone ; on shore, and when
Thro' scudding drifts the rainy Hyades
Vext the dim sea : I am become a name ;
For always roaming with a hungry heart
Much have I seen and known ; cities of men
And manners, climates, councils, governments,

Myself not least, but honour'd of them all ;
 And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
 Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.
 I am a part of all that I have met ;
 Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'
 Gleams that untravell'd world, whose margin fades
 For ever and for ever when I move.
 How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
 To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use !
 As tho' to breathe were life. Life piled on life
 Were all too little, and of one to me
 Little remains : but every hour is saved
 From that eternal silence, something more,
 A bringer of new things ; and vile it were
 For some three suns to store and hoard myself,
 And this gray spirit yearning in desire
 To follow knowledge, like a sinking star,
 Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.

This is my son, mine own Telemachus,
 To whom I leave the sceptre and the isle—
 Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfil
 This labour, by slow prudence to make mild

A rugged people, and thro' soft degrees
Subdue them to the useful and the good.
Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere
Of common duties, decent not to fail
In offices of tenderness, and pay
Meet adoration to my household gods
When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.

There lies the port : the vessel puffs her sail :
There gloom the dark broad seas. My mariners,
Souls that have toil'd, and wrought, and thought with me—
That ever with a frolic welcome took
The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed
Free hearts, free foreheads—you and I are old ;
Old age hath yet his honour and his toil ;
Death closes all : but something ere the end,
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.
The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks :
The long day wanes : the slow moon climbs : the deep
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite

The sounding furrows ; for my purpose holds
 To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
 Of all the western stars, until I die.
 It may be that the gulfs will wash us down :
 It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
 And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
 Tho' much is taken, much abides ; and tho'
 We are not now that strength which in old days
 Moved earth and heaven ; that which we are, we are ;
 One equal temper of heroic hearts,
 Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
 To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

LOCKSLEY HALL.

COMRADES, leave me here a little, while as yet 'tis early
morn :

Leave me here, and when you want me, sound upon the
bugle horn.

'Tis the place, and all around it, as of old, the curlews
call,

Dreary gleams about the moorland flying over Locksley
Hall ;

Locksley Hall, that in the distance overlooks the sandy
tracts,

And the hollow ocean-ridges roaring into cataracts.

Many a night from yonder ivied casement, ere I went to
rest,

Did I look on great Orion sloping slowly to the West.

Many a night I saw the Pleiads, rising thro' the mellow
shade,

Glitter like a swarm of fire-flies tangled in a silver braid.

Here about the beach I wander'd, nourishing a youth
sublime

With the fairy tales of science, and the long result of
Time ;

When the centuries behind me like a fruitful land
reposed ;

When I clung to all the present for the promise that it
closed :

When I dipt into the future far as human eye could
see ;

Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonder that
would be.—

In the Spring a fuller crimson comes upon the Robin's
breast ;

In the Spring the wanton lapwing gets himself another
crest ;

In the Spring a livelier iris changes on the burnish'd dove ;
In the Spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts
of love.

Then her cheek was pale and thinner than should be for
one so young,

And her eyes on all my motions with a mute observance
hung.

And I said, " My cousin Amy, speak, and speak the truth
to me,

Trust me, cousin, all the current of my being sets to thee."

On her pallid cheek and forehead came a colour and a
light,

As I have seen the rosy red flushing in the northern
night.

And she turn'd—her bosom shaken with a sudden storm
of sighs—

All the spirit deeply dawning in the dark of hazel eyes—

Saying, “ I have hid my feelings, fearing they should do
me wrong ;”

Saying, “ Dost thou love me, cousin ? ” weeping, “ I have
loved thee long.”

Love took up the glass of Time, and turn'd it in his
glowing hands ;

Every moment, lightly shaken, ran itself in golden sands.

Love took up the harp of Life, and smote on all the
chords with might ;

Smote the chord of Self, that, trembling, pass'd in music
out of sight.

Many a morning on the moorland did we hear the copses
ring,

And her whisper throng'd my pulses with the fullness of
the Spring.

Many an evening by the waters did we watch the stately
ships,
And our spirits rush'd together at the touching of the lips.

O my cousin, shallow-hearted ! O my Amy, mine no
more !

O the dreary, dreary moorland ! O the barren, barren
shore !

Falser than all fancy fathoms, falser than all songs have
sung,
Puppet to a father's threat, and servile to a shrewish
tongue !

Is it well to wish thee happy ?—having known me—to
decline
On a range of lower feelings and a narrower heart than
mine !

Yet it shall be : thou shalt lower to his level day by day,
What is fine within thee growing coarse to sympathise
with clay.

As the husband is, the wife is : thou art mated with a
clown,

And the grossness of his nature will have weight to drag
thee down.

He will hold thee, when his passion shall have spent its
novel force,

Something better than his dog, a little dearer than his
horse.

What is this ? his eyes are heavy : think not they are
glazed with wine.

Go to him : it is thy duty : kiss him : take his hand in thine.

It may be my lord is weary, that his brain is overwrought :
Soothe him with thy finer fancies, touch him with thy
lighter thought.

He will answer to the purpose, easy things to under-
stand——

Better thou wert dead before me, tho' I slew thee with
my hand !

Better thou and I were lying, hidden from the heart's
disgrace,

Roll'd in one another's arms, and silent in a last embrace.

Cursed be the social wants that sin against the strength
of youth !

Cursed be the social lies that warp us from the living
truth !

Cursed be the sickly forms that err from honest Nature's
rule !

Cursed be the gold that gilds the straiten'd forehead of
the fool !

Well—'tis well that I should bluster !—Hadst thou less
unworthy proved—

Would to God—for I had loved thee more than ever
wife was loved.

Am I mad, that I should cherish that which bears but
bitter fruit ?

I will pluck it from my bosom, tho' my heart be at the
root.

Never, tho' my mortal summers to such length of years
should come

As the many-winter'd crow that leads the clanging rookery
home.

Where is comfort ? in division of the records of the
mind ?

Can I part her from herself, and love her, as I knew her,
kind ?

I remember one that perish'd: sweetly did she speak and
move :

Such a one do I remember, whom to look at was to love.

Can I think of her as dead, and love her for the love she
bore ?

No—she never loved me truly : love is love for evermore.

Comfort ? comfort scorn'd of devils ! this is truth the poet
sings,

That a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier
things.

Drug thy memories, lest thou learn it, lest thy heart be
put to proof,

In the dead unhappy night, and when the rain is on the
roof.

Like a dog, he hunts in dreams, and thou art staring at
the wall,

Where the dying night-lamp flickers, and the shadows rise
and fall.

Then a hand shall pass before thee, pointing to his drunken
sleep,

To thy widow'd marriage-pillows, to the tears that thou
wilt weep.

Thou shalt hear the "Never, never," whisper'd by the
phantom years,

And a song from out the distance in the ringing of thine ears ;

And an eye shall vex thee, looking ancient kindness on
thy pain.

Turn thee, turn thee on thy pillow : get thee to thy rest
again.

Nay, but Nature brings thee solace ; for a tender voice
will cry.

'Tis a purer life than thine ; a lip to drain thy trouble dry.

Baby lips will laugh me down : my latest rival brings
thee rest.

Baby fingers, waxen touches, press me from the mother's
breast.

O, the child too clothes the father with a dearness not
his due.

Half is thine and half is his : it will be worthy of the
two.

O, I see thee old and formal, fitted to thy petty part,
With a little hoard of maxims preaching down a
daughter's heart.

“ They were dangerous guides the feelings—she herself
was not exempt—

Truly, she herself had suffer'd ”—Perish in thy self-con-
tempt !

Overlive it—lower yet—be happy! wherefore should
I care ?

I myself must mix with action, lest I wither by despair.

What is that which I should turn to, lighting upon days
like these ?

Every door is barr'd with gold, and opens but to golden
keys.

Every gate is throng'd with suitors, all the markets over-
flow.

I have but an angry fancy: what is that which I should do ?

I had been content to perish, falling on the foeman's
ground,

When the ranks are roll'd in vapour, and the winds are
laid with sound.

But the jingling of the guinea helps the hurt that Honour
feels,

And the nations do but murmur, snarling at each other's
heels.

Can I but relive in sadness ? I will turn that earlier page.
Hide me from my deep emotion, O thou wondrous
Mother-Age !

Make me feel the wild pulsation that I felt before the
strife,
When I heard my days before me, and the tumult of my
life ;

Yearning for the large excitement that the coming years
would yield,
Eager-hearted as a boy when first he leaves his father's
field,

And at night along the dusky highway near and nearer
drawn,
Sees in heaven the light of London flaring like a dreary
dawn ;

And his spirit leaps within him to be gone before him then,
Underneath the light he looks at, in among the throngs
of men ;

Men, my brothers, men the workers, ever reaping something new :

That which they have done but earnest of the things that they shall do :

For I dipt into the future, far as human eye could see,
Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonder that would be ;

Saw the heavens fill with commerce, argosies of magic sails,
Pilots of the purple twilight, dropping down with costly bales ;

Heard the heavens fill with shouting, and there rain'd a ghastly dew
From the nations' airy navies grappling in the central blue ;

Far along the world-wide whisper of the south-wind rushing warm,
With the standards of the peoples plunging thro' the thunder-storm ;

Till the war-drum throb'd no longer, and the battle-flags
were furl'd

In the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world.

There the common sense of most shall hold a fretful realm
in awe,

And the kindly earth shall slumber, lapt in universal law.

So I triumph'd, ere my passion sweeping thro' me left
me dry,

Left me with the palsied heart, and left me with the
jaundiced eye ;

Eye, to which all order festers, all things here are out of
joint,

Science moves, but slowly slowly, creeping on from point
to point :

Slowly comes a hungry people, as a lion, creeping
nigher,

Glares at one that nods and winks behind a slowly-dying
fire.

Yet I doubt not thro' the ages one increasing purpose runs,
And the thoughts of men are widen'd with the process of
the suns.

What is that to him that reaps not harvest of his youth-
ful joys,
Tho' the deep heart of existence beat for ever like a boy's ?

Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers, and I linger on
the shore,
And the individual withers, and the world is more and
more.

Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers, and he bears a
laden breast,
Full of sad experience moving toward the stillness of his
rest.

Hark, my merry comrades call me, sounding on the
bugle-horn,
They to whom my foolish passion were a target for their
scorn :

Shall it not be scorn to me to harp on such a moulder'd
string ?

I am shamed thro' all my nature to have loved so slight
a thing.

Weakness to be wroth with weakness ! woman's pleasure,
woman's pain—

Nature made them blinder motions bounded in a shal-
lower brain :

Woman is the lesser man, and all thy passions, match'd
with mine,

Are as moonlight unto sunlight, and as water unto wine—

Here at least, where nature sickens, nothing. Ah, for
some retreat

Deep in yonder shining Orient, where my life began to
beat ;

Where in wild Mahratta-battle fell my father evil-starred ;
I was left a trampled orphan, and a selfish uncle's
ward.

Or to burst all links of habit—there to wander far
away,

On from island unto island at the gateways of the day.

Larger constellations burning, mellow moons and happy
skies,

Breadths of tropic shade and palms in cluster, knots of
Paradise.

Never comes the trader, never floats an European flag,
Slides the bird o'er lustrous woodland, droops the trailer
from the crag ;

Droops the heavy-blossom'd bower, hangs the heavy-
fruited tree—

Summer isles of Eden lying in dark-purple spheres
of sea.

There methinks would be enjoyment more than in this
march of mind,

In the steamship, in the railway, in the thoughts that
shake mankind.

There the passions cramp'd no longer shall have scope
and breathing-space ;

I will take some savage woman, she shall rear my dusky race.

Iron-jointed, supple-sinew'd, they shall dive, and they
shall run,

Catch the wild goat by the hair, and hurl their lances in
the sun ;

Whistle back the parrot's call, and leap the rainbows of
the brooks,

Not with blinded eyesight poring over miserable books——

Fool, again the dream, the fancy ! but I *know* my words
are wild,

But I count the gray barbarian lower than the Christian
child.

I, to herd with narrow foreheads, vacant of our glorious
gains,

Like a beast with lower pleasures, like a beast with lower
pains !

Mated with a squalid savage—what to me were sun or
clime ?

I the heir of all the ages, in the foremost files of time—

I that rather held it better men should perish one by
one,

Than that earth should stand at gaze like Joshua's moon
in Ajalon !

Not in vain the distance beacons. Forward, forward let
us range.

Let the great world spin for ever down the ringing grooves
of change.

Thro' the shadow of the globe we sweep into the younger
day :

Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay.

Mother-age (for mine I knew not) help me as when
life begun :

Rift the hills, and roll the waters, flash the lightnings,
weigh the Sun—

O, I see the crescent promise of my spirit hath not
set.

Ancient founts of inspiration well thro' all my fancy yet.

Howsoever these things be, a long farewell to Locksley
Hall !

Now for me the woods may wither, now for me the roof-
tree fall.

Comes a vapour from the margin, blackening over heath
and holt,

Cramming all the blast before it, in its breast a thunder-
bolt.

Let it fall on Locksley Hall, with rain or hail, or fire or
snow ;

For the mighty wind arises, roaring seaward, and I go.

GODIVA.

*I waited for the train at Coventry ;
I hung with grooms and porters on the bridge,
To watch the three tall spires ; and there I shaped
The city's ancient legend into this :—*

Not only we, the latest seed of Time,
New men, that in the flying of a wheel
Cry down the past, not only we, that prate
Of rights and wrongs, have loved the people well,
And loathed to see them overtax'd ; but she
Did more, and underwent, and overcame,
The woman of a thousand summers back,
Godiva, wife to that grim Earl, who ruled
In Coventry : for when he laid a tax
Upon his town, and all the mothers brought

Their children, clamouring, "If we pay, we starve"
She sought her lord, and found him, where he strode
About the hall, among his dogs, alone,
His beard a foot before him, and his hair
A yard behind. She told him of their tears,
And pray'd him, "If they pay this tax, they starve."
Whereat he stared, replying, half-amazed,
"You would not let your little finger ache
For such as *these*?"—"But I would die," said she.
He laugh'd, and swore by Peter and by Paul:
Then fillip'd at the diamond in her ear;
"O ay, ay, ay, you talk!"—"Alas!" she said,
"But prove me what it is I would not do."
And from a heart, as rough as Esau's hand,
He answer'd, "Ride you naked thro' the town,
And I repeat it;" and nodding, as in scorn,
He parted, with great strides among his dogs.

So left alone, the passions of her mind,
As winds from all the compass shift and blow,
Made war upon each other for an hour,
Till pity won. She sent a herald forth,
And bad him cry, with sound of trumpet, all

The hard condition ; but that she would loose
The people : therefore, as they loved her well,
From then till noon no foot should pace the street,
No eye look down, she passing ; but that all
Should keep within, door shut, and window barr'd.

Then fled she to her inmost bower, and there
Unclasp'd the wedded eagles of her belt,
The grim Earl's gift ; but ever at a breath
She linger'd, looking like a summer moon
Half-dipt in cloud : anon she shook her head,
And shower'd the rippled ringlets to her knee ;
Unclad herself in haste ; adown the stair
Stole on ; and, like a creeping sunbeam, slid
From pillar unto pillar, until she reach'd
The gateway ; there she found her palfrey trapt
In purple blazon'd with armorial gold.

Then she rode forth, clothed on with chastity :
The deep air listen'd round her as she rode,
And all the low wind hardly breathed for fear.
The little wide-mouth'd heads upon the spout
Had cunning eyes to see : the barking cur
Made her cheek flame : her palfrey's footfall shot

Light horrors thro' her pulses : the blind walls
Were full of chinks and holes ; and overhead
Fantastic gables, crowding, stared : but she
Not less thro' all bore up, till, last, she saw
The white-flower'd elder-thicket from the field
Gleam thro' the Gothic archways in the wall.

Then she rode back, clothed on with chastity :
And one low churl, compact of thankless earth,
The fatal byword of all years to come,
Boring a little auger-hole in fear,
Peep'd—but his eyes, before they had their will,
Were shrivell'd into darkness in his head,
And dropt before him. So the Powers, who wait
On noble deeds, cancell'd a sense misused ;
And she, that knew not, pass'd : and all at once,
With twelve great shocks of sound, the shameless noon
Was clash'd and hammer'd from a hundred towers,
One after one : but even then she gain'd
Her bower ; whence reissuing, robed and crown'd,
To meet her lord, she took the tax away,
And built herself an everlasting name.

THE TWO VOICES.

A STILL small voice spake unto me,
“Thou art so full of misery,
Were it not better not to be ?”

Then to the still small voice I said ;
“Let me not cast in endless shade
What is so wonderfully made.”

To which the voice did urge reply ;
“To-day I saw the dragon-fly
Come from the wells where he did lie.

“ An inner impulse rent the veil
Of his old husk : from head to tail
Came out clear plates of sapphire mail.

“ He dried his wings : like gauze they grew :
Thro’ crofts and pastures wet with dew
A living flash of light he flew.”

I said, “ When first the world began,
Young Nature thro’ five cycles ran,
And in the sixth she moulded man.

“ She gave him mind, the lordliest
Proportion, and, above the rest,
Dominion in the head and breast.”

Thereto the silent voice replied ;
“ Self-blinded are you by your pride :
Look up thro’ night : the world is wide.

“ This truth within thy mind rehearse,
That in a boundless universe
Is boundless better, boundless worse.

“ Think you this mould of hopes and fears
Could find no statelier than his peers
In yonder hundred million spheres ? ”

It spake, moreover, in my mind :
“ Tho’ thou wert scatter’d to the wind,
Yet is there plenty of the kind.”

Then did my response clearer fall :
“ No compound of this earthly ball
Is like another, all in all.”

To which he answer’d scoffingly ;
“ Good soul ! suppose I grant it thee,
Who’ll weep for thy deficiency ?

“ Or will one beam be less intense,
When thy peculiar difference
Is cancell’d in the world of sense ? ”

I would have said, “ Thou canst not know,”
But my full heart, that work’d below,
Rain’d thro’ my sight its overflow.

Again the voice spake unto me :
“ Thou art so steep’d in misery,
Surely ’twere better not to be.

“ Thine anguish will not let thee sleep,
Nor any train of reason keep :
Thou canst not think, but thou wilt weep.”

I said, “ The years with change advance :
If I make dark my countenance,
I shut my life from happier chance.

“Some turn this sickness yet might take,
Ev’n yet.” But he : “What drug can make
A wither’d palsy cease to shake ? ”

I wept, “Tho’ I should die, I know
That all about the thorn will blow
In tufts of rosy-tinted snow ;

“And men, thro’ novel spheres of thought
Still moving after truth long sought,
Will learn new things when I am not.”

“Yet,” said the secret voice, “some time,
Sooner or later, will gray prime
Make thy grass hoar with early rime.

“Not less swift souls that yearn for light,
Rapt after heaven’s starry flight,
Would sweep the tracts of day and night.

“ Not less the bee would range her cells,
The furzy prickle fire the dells,
The foxglove cluster dappled bells.”

I said that “ all the years invent ;
Each month is various to present
The world with some development.

“ Were this not well, to bide mine hour,
Tho’ watching from a ruin’d tower
How grows the day of human power ? ”

“ The highest-mounted mind,” he said,
“ Still sees the sacred morning spread
The silent summit overhead.

“ Will thirty seasons render plain
Those lonely lights that still remain,
Just breaking over land and main ?

“ Or make that morn, from his cold crown
And crystal silence creeping down,
Flood with full daylight glebe and town ?

“ Forerun thy peers, thy time, and let
Thy feet, millenniums hence, be set
In midst of knowledge, dream’d not yet.

“ Thou hast not gain’d a real height,
Nor art thou nearer to the light,
Because the scale is infinite.

“ ’Twere better not to breathe or speak,
Than cry for strength, remaining weak,
And seem to find, but still to seek.

“ Moreover, but to seem to find
Asks what thou lackest, thought resign’d,
A healthy frame, a quiet mind.”

I said, "When I am gone away,
'He dared not tarry,' men will say,
Doing dishonour to my clay."

"This is more vile," he made reply,
"To breathe and loathe, to live and sigh,
Than once from dread of pain to die."

"Sick art thou—a divided will
Still heaping on the fear of ill
The fear of men, a coward still."

"Do men love thee? Art thou so bound
To men, that how thy name may sound
Will vex thee lying underground?"

"The memory of the wither'd leaf
In endless time is scarce more brief
Than of the garner'd Autumn-sheaf."

“ Go, vexed Spirit, sleep in trust ;
The right ear, that is fill’d with dust,
Hears little of the false or just.”

“ Hard task, to pluck resolve,” I cried,
“ From emptiness and the waste wide
Of that abyss, or scornful pride !

“ Nay—rather yet that I could raise
One hope that warn’d me in the days
While still I yearn’d for human praise.

“ When, wide in soul and bold of tongue,
Among the tents I paused and sung,
The distant battle flash’d and rung.

“ I sung the joyful Pæan clear,
And, sitting, burnish’d without fear
The brand, the buckler, and the spear—

“ Waiting to strive a happy strife,
To war with falsehood to the knife.
And not to lose the good of life—

“ Some hidden principle to move,
To put together, part and prove,
And mete the bounds of hate and love—

“ As far as might be, to carve out
Free space for every human doubt,
That the whole mind might orb about—

“ To search thro’ all I felt or saw,
The springs of life, the depths of awe,
And reach the law within the law :

“ At least, not rotting like a weed,
But, having sown some generous seed,
Fruitful of further thought and deed,

“ To pass, when Life her light withdraws,
Not void of righteous self-applause,
Nor in a merely selfish cause—

“ In some good cause, not in mine own,
To perish, wept for, honour'd, known,
And like a warrior overthrown ;

“ Whose eyes are dim with glorious tears,
When, soil'd with noble dust, he hears
His country's war-song thrill his ears :

“ Then dying of a mortal stroke,
What time the foeman's line is broke,
And all the war is roll'd in smoke.”

“ Yea !” said the voice, “ thy dream was good,
While thou 'abodest in the bud.
It was the stirring of the blood.

“ If Nature put not forth her power
About the opening of the flower,
Who is it that could live an hour ?

“ Then comes the check, the change, the fall.
Pain rises up, old pleasures pall.
There is one remedy for all.

“ Yet hadst thou, thro’ enduring pain,
Link’d month to month with such a chain
Of knitted purport, all were vain.

“ Thou hadst not between death and birth
Dissolved the riddle of the earth.
So were thy labour little-worth.

“ That men with knowledge merely play’d.
I told thee—hardly nigher made,
Tho’ scaling slow from grade to grade ;

“ Much less this dreamer, deaf and blind,
Named man, may hope some truth to find,
That bears relation to the mind.

“ For every worm beneath the moon X
Draws different threads, and late and soon
Spins, toiling out his own cocoon.

“ Cry, faint not : either Truth is born
Beyond the polar gleam forlorn,
Or in the gateways of the morn.

“ Cry, faint not, climb : the summits slope
Beyond the furthest flights of hope,
Wrapt in dense cloud from base to cope.

“ Sometimes a little corner shines,
As over rainy mist inclines
A gleaming crag with belts of pines.

“ I will go forward, sayest thou,
I shall not fail to find her now.
Look up, the fold is on her brow.

“ If straight thy track, or if oblique,
Thou know'st not. Shadows thou dost strike.
Embracing cloud, Ixion-like ;

“ And owning but a little more
Than beasts, abidest lame and poor.
Calling thyself a little lower

“ Than angels. Cease to wail and brawl !
Why inch by inch to darkness crawl ?
There is one remedy for all.”

“ O dull, one-sided voice,” said I,
“ Wilt thou make everything a lie,
To flatter me that I may die ?

“ I know that age to age succeeds, /
Blowing a noise of tongues and deeds,
A dust of systems and of creeds.

“ I cannot hide that some have striven,
Achieving calm, to whom was given
The joy that mixes man with Heaven :

“ Who, rowing hard against the stream,
Saw distant gates of Eden gleam,
And did not dream it was a dream ;

“ But heard, by secret transport led,
Ev’n in the charnels of the dead,
The murmur of the fountain-head—

“ Which did accomplish their desire,
Bore and forbore, and did not tire,
Like Stephen, an unquenched fire.

“ He heeded not reviling tones,
Nor sold his heart to idle moans,
Tho’ cursed and scorn’d, and bruised with stones :

“ But looking upward, full of grace,
He pray’d, and from a happy place
God’s glory smote him on the face.”

The sullen answer slid betwixt :
“ Not that the grounds of hope were fix’d,
The elements were kindlier mix’d.”

I said, “ I toil beneath the curse,
But, knowing not the universe,
I fear to slide from bad to worse.

“ And that, in seeking to undo
One riddle, and to find the true
I knit a hundred others new :

“ Or that this anguish fleeting hence,
Unmanacled from bonds of sense,
Be fix’d and froz’n to permanence :

“ For I go, weak from suffering here ;
Naked I go, and void of cheer :
What is it that I may not fear ?”

“ Consider well,” the voice replied,
“ His face, that two hours since hath died ;
Wilt thou find passion, pain or pride ?

“ Will he obey when one commands ?
Or answer should one press his hands ?
He answers not, nor understands.

“ His palms are folded on his breast :
There is no other thing express’d
But long disquiet merged in rest.

“ His lips are very mild and meek :
Though one should smite him on the cheek,
And on the mouth, he will not speak.

“ His little daughter, whose sweet face
He kiss'd, taking his last embrace,
Becomes dishonour to her race—

“ His sons grow up that bear his name,
Some grow to honour, some to shame,—
But he is chill to praise or blame.

“ He will not hear the north-wind rave,
Nor, moaning, household shelter crave
From winter rains that beat his grave.

“ High up the vapours fold and swim :
About him broods the twilight dim :
The place he knew forgetteth him.”

“ If all be dark, vague voice,” I said,
“ These things are wrapt in doubt and dread,
Nor canst thou show the dead are dead.

“ The sap dries up : the plant declines.
A deeper tale my heart divines.
Know I not Death ? the outward signs ?

“ I found him when my years were few ;
A shadow on the graves I knew,
And darkness in the village yew.

“ From grave to grave the shadow crept :
In her still place the morning wept :
Touch’d by his feet the daisy slept.

“ The simple senses crown’d his head :
‘ Omega ! thou art Lord,’ they said,
‘ We find no motion in the dead.’

“ Why, if man rot in dreamless ease,
Should that plain fact, as taught by these,
Not make him sure that he shall cease ?

“ Who forged that other influence,
That heat of inward evidence,
By which he doubts against the sense ?

“ He owns the fatal gift of eyes,
That read his spirit blindly wise,
Not simple as a thing that dies.

“ Here sits he shaping wings to fly :
His heart forebodes a mystery :
He names the name Eternity.

“ That type of Perfect in his mind
In Nature can he nowhere find.
He sows himself on every wind.

“ He seems to hear a Heavenly Friend,
And thro’ thick veils to apprehend
A labour working to an end.

“ The end and the beginning vex
His reason : many things perplex,
With motions, checks, and counterchecks.

“ He knows a baseness in his blood
At such strange war with something good,
He may not do the thing he would.

“ Heaven opens inward, chasms yawn.
Vast images in glimmering dawn,
Half shown, are broken and withdrawn.

“ Ah ! sure within him and without,
Could his dark wisdom find it out,
There must be answer to his doubt.

“ But thou canst answer not again.
With thine own weapon art thou slain,
Or thou wilt answer but in vain.

“ The doubt would rest, I dare not solve.
In the same circle we revolve.
Assurance only breeds resolve.”

As when a billow, blown against,
Falls back, the voice with which I fenced
A little ceased, but recommenced.

“ Where wert thou when thy father play’d
In his free field, and pastime made,
A merry boy in sun and shade ?

“ A merry boy they called him then.
He sat upon the knees of men
In days that never come again.

“ Before the little ducts began
To feed thy bones with lime, and ran
Their course, till thou wert also man :

“ Who took a wife, who rear’d his race,
Whose wrinkles gather’d on his face,
Whose troubles number with his days :

“ A life of nothings, nothing-worth,
From that first nothing ere his birth
To that last nothing under earth !”

“ These words,” I said, “ are like the rest,
No certain clearness, but at best
A vague suspicion of the breast :

“ But if I grant, thou might’st defend
The thesis which thy words intend—
That to begin implies to end ;

“ Yet how should I for certain hold,
Because my memory is so cold,
That I first was in human mould ?

“ I cannot make this matter plain,
But I would shoot, howe’er in vain,
A random arrow from the brain.

“ It may be that no life is found,
Which only to one engine bound
Falls off, but cycles always round.

“ As old mythologies relate,
Some draught of Lethe might await
The slipping thro’ from state to state.

“ As here we find in trances, men
Forget the dream that happens then,
Until they fall in trance again.

“ So might we, if our state were such
As one before, remember much,
For those two likes might meet and touch.

“ But, if I lapsed from nobler place,
Some legend of a fallen race
Alone might hint of my disgrace ;

“ Some vague emotion of delight
In gazing up an Alpine height,
Some yearning toward the lamps of night.

“ Or if thro’ lower lives I came—
Tho’ all experience past became
Consolidate in mind and frame—

“ I might forget my weaker lot ;
For is not our first year forgot ?
The haunts of memory echo not.

“ And men, whose reason long was blind,
From cells of madness unconfined,
Oft lose whole years of darker mind.

“ Much more, if first I floated free,
As naked essence, must I be
Incompetent of memory :

“ For memory dealing but with time,
And he with matter, could she climb
Beyond her own material prime ?

“ Moreover, something is or seems,
That touches me with mystic gleams.
Like glimpses of forgotten dreams—

“ Of something felt, like something here ;
Of something done, I know not where ;
Such as no language may declare.”

The still voice laugh'd. "I talk," said he,
"Not with thy dreams. Suffice it thee
Thy pain is a reality."

"But thou," said I, "hast miss'd thy mark,
Who sought'st to wreck my mortal ark,
By making all the horizon dark.

"Why not set forth, if I should do
This rashness, that which might ensue
With this old soul in organs new ?

"Whatever crazy sorrow saith,
No life that breathes with human breath
Has ever truly long'd for death.

"'Tis life, whereof our nerves are scant,
Oh life, not death, for which we pant ;
More life, and fuller, that I want."

I ceas'd, and sat as one forlorn.
Then said the voice, in quiet scorn,
" Behold, it is the Sabbath morn."

And I arose, and I released
The casement, and the light increased
With freshness in the dawning east.

Like soften'd airs that blowing steal,
When meres begin to uncongeal,
The sweet church bells began to peal.

On to God's house the people prest :
Passing the place where each must rest,
Each enter'd like a welcome guest.

One walk'd between his wife and child,
With measur'd footfall firm and mild,
And now and then he gravely smiled.

The prudent partner of his blood
Lean'd on him, faithful, gentle, good,
Wearing the rose of womanhood.

And in their double love secure,
The little maiden walk'd demure,
Pacing with downward eyelids pure.

These three made unity so sweet,
My frozen heart began to beat,
Remembering its ancient heat.

I blest them, and they wander'd on :
I spoke, but answer came there none :
The dull and bitter voice was gone.

A second voice was at mine ear,
A little whisper silver-clear,
A murmur, " Be of better cheer."

As from some blissful neighbourhood,
A notice faintly understood,
“ I see the end, and know the good.”

A little hint to solace woe,
A hint, a whisper breathing low,
“ I may not speak of what I know.”

Like an Æolian harp that wakes
No certain air, but overtakes
Far thought with music that it makes :

Such seem'd the whisper at my side :
“ What is it thou knowest, sweet voice ? ” I cried.
“ A hidden hope,” the voice replied :

So heavenly-toned, that in that hour
From out my sullen heart a power
Broke, like the rainbow from the shower,

To feel, altho' no tongue can prove,
That every cloud, that spreads above
And veileth love, itself is love.

And forth into the fields I went,
And Nature's living motion lent
The pulse of hope to discontent.

I wonder'd at the bounteous hours,
The slow result of winter showers :
You scarce could see the grass for flowers.

I wonder'd, while I paced along :
The woods were fill'd so full with song.
There seem'd no room for sense of wrong.

So variously seem'd all things wrought,
I marvell'd how the mind was brought
To anchor by one gloomy thought ;

And wherefore rather I made choice
To commune with that barren voice,
Than him that said, “ Rejoice ! rejoice ! ”

THE DAY-DREAM.



PROLOGUE.

O, LADY FLORA, let me speak :

A pleasant hour has past away
While, dreaming on your damask cheek,

The dewy sister-eyelids lay.

As by the lattice you reclined,

I went thro' many wayward moods
To see you dreaming—and, behind,

A summer crisp with shining woods.

And I too dream'd, until at last

Across my fancy, brooding warm,
The reflex of a legend past,

And loosely settled into form.

And would you have the thought I had,

And see the vision that I saw,

So take the broidery-frame, and add

A crimson to the quaint Macaw,

And I will tell it. Turn your face,

Nor look with that too-earnest eye—

The rhymes are dazzled from their place,

And order'd words asunder fly.

THE SLEEPING PALACE.

THE varying year with blade and sheaf

Clothes and reclothes the happy plains :

Here rests the sap within the leaf,

Here stays the blood along the veins.

Faint shadows, vapours lightly curl'd,

Faint murmurs from the meadows come,

Like hints and echoes of the world

To spirits folded in the womb.

Soft lustre bathes the range of urns
On every slanting terrace-lawn.
The fountain to his place returns
Deep in the garden lake withdrawn.
Here droops the banner on the tower,
On the hall-hearths the festal fires,
The peacock in his laurel bower,
The parrot in his gilded wires.

Roof-haunting martins warm their eggs :
In these, in those the life is stay'd.
The mantles from the golden pegs
Droop sleepily : no sound is made,
Not even of a gnat that sings.
More like a picture seemeth all
Than those old portraits of old kings,
That watch the sleepers from the wall.

Here sits the Butler with a flask
Between his knees, half-drain'd ; and there
The wrinkled steward at his task,
The maid-of-honour blooming fair :

The page has caught her hand in his :

Her lips are sever'd as to speak :

His own are pouted to a kiss :

The blush is fix'd upon her cheek.

Till all the hundred summers pass,

The beams, that thro' the Oriel shine,

Make prisms in every carven glass,

And beaker brimm'd with noble wine.

Each baron at the banquet sleeps,

Grave faces gather'd in a ring.

His state the king reposing keeps.

He must have been a jolly king.

All round a hedge upshoots, and shows

At distance like a little wood ;

Thorns, ivies, woodbine, misletoes,

And grapes with bunches red as blood ;

All creeping plants, a wall of green

Close-matted, bur and brake and briar,

And glimpsing over these, just seen,

High up, the topmost palace-spire.

When will the hundred summers die,
And thought and time be born again,
And newer knowledge, drawing nigh,
Bring truth that sways the soul of men ?
Here all things in their place remain,
As all were order'd, ages since.
Come, Care and Pleasure, Hope and Pain,
And bring the fated fairy Prince.

THE SLEEPING BEAUTY.

YEAR after year unto her feet,
She lying on her couch alone,
Across the purpled coverlet,
The maiden's jet-black hair has grown,
On either side her tranced form
Forth streaming from a braid of pearl :
The slumbrous light is rich and warm,
And moves not on the rounded curl.

The silk star-broider'd coverlid
Unto her limbs itself doth mould
Languidly ever ; and, amid
Her full black ringlets downward roll'd,
Glow's forth each softly-shadow'd arm
With bracelets of the diamond bright :
Her constant beauty doth inform
Stillness with love, and day with light.

She sleeps : her breathings are not heard
In palace chambers far apart.
The fragrant tresses are not stirr'd
That lie upon her charmed heart.
She sleeps : on either hand upswells
The gold-fringed pillow lightly prest :
She sleeps, nor dreams, but ever dwells
A perfect form in perfect rest.

THE ARRIVAL.

ALL precious things, discover'd late,
To those that seek them issue forth ;
For love in sequel works with fate,
And draws the veil from hidden worth.
He travels far from other skies—
His mantle glitters on the rocks—
A fairy Prince, with joyful eyes,
And lighter-footed than the fox.

The bodies and the bones of those
That strove in other days to pass,
Are wither'd in the thorny close,
Or scatter'd blanching in the grass.
He gazes on the silent dead :
“ They perish'd in their daring deeds.”
This proverb flashes thro' his head,
“ The many fail : the one succeeds.”

He comes, scarce knowing what he seeks :

He breaks the hedge : he enters there :

The colour flies into his cheeks :

He trusts to light on something fair ;

For all his life the charm did talk

About his path, and hover near

With words of promise in his walk,

And whisper'd voices in his ear.

More close and close his footsteps wind ;

The magic music in his heart

Beats quick and quicker, till he find

The quiet chamber far apart.

His spirit flutters like a lark,

He stoops—to kiss her—on his knee.

“ Love, if thy tresses be so dark,

How dark those hidden eyes must be !”

THE REVIVAL.

A TOUCH, a kiss ! the charm was snapt.

There rose a noise of striking clocks,
And feet that ran, and doors that clapt,
And barking dogs, and crowing cocks ;
A fuller light illumined all,
A breeze thro' all the garden swept,
A sudden hubbub shook the hall,
And sixty feet the fountain leapt.

The hedge broke in, the banner blew,
The butler drank, the steward scrawl'd,
The fire shot up, the martin flew,
The parrot scream'd, the peacock squall'd,
The maid and page renew'd their strife,
The palace bang'd, and buzz'd and clackt,
And all the long-pent stream of life
Dash'd downward in a cataract.

And last of all the king awoke,

And in his chair himself uprear'd,

And yawn'd, and rubb'd his face, and spoke,

“ By holy rood, a royal beard !

How say you ? we have slept, my lords.

My beard has grown into my lap.”

The barons swore, with many words,

’Twas but an after-dinner’s nap.

“ Pardy,” return’d the king, “ but still

My joints are something stiff or so.

My lord, and shall we pass the bill

I mention’d half an hour ago ?”

The chancellor, sedate and vain,

In courteous words return’d reply :

But dallied with his golden chain,

And, smiling, put the question by.

THE DEPARTURE.

AND on her lover's arm she leant,
And round her waist she felt it fold,
And far across the hills they went
In that new world which is the old :
Across the hills, and far away
Beyond their utmost purple rim,
And deep into the dying day
The happy princess follow'd him.

“ I'd sleep another hundred years,
O love, for such another kiss ;”
“ O wake for ever, love,” she hears,
“ O love, 'twas such as this and this.”
And o'er them many a sliding star,
And many a merry wind was borne,
And, stream'd thro' many a golden bar,
The twilight melted into morn.

“ O eyes long laid in happy sleep ! ”

“ O happy sleep, that lightly fled ! ”

“ O happy kiss, that woke thy sleep ! ”

“ O love, thy kiss would wake the dead ! ”

And o'er them many a flowing range

Of vapour buoy'd the crescent-bark.

And, rapt thro' many a rosy change,

The twilight died into the dark.

“ A hundred summers ! can it be ?

And whither goest thou, tell me where ? ”

“ O seek my father's court with me,

For there are greater wonders there.”

And o'er the hills, and far away

Beyond their utmost purple rim,

Beyond the night, across the day,

Thro' all the world she follow'd him.

MORAL.

So, Lady Flora, take my lay,
And if you find no moral there,
Go look in any glass and say,
What moral is in being fair.
Oh, to what uses shall we put
The wildweed-flower that simply blows ?
And is there any moral shut
Within the bosom of the rose ?

But any man that walks the mead,
In bud or blade, or bloom, may find,
According as his humours lead,
A meaning suited to his mind.
And liberal applications lie
In Art like Nature, dearest friend ;
So 'twere to cramp its use, if I
Should hook it to some useful end.

L'ENVOI.

You shake your head. A random string
Your finer female sense offends.
Well—were it not a pleasant thing
To fall asleep with all one's friends ;
To pass with all our social ties
To silence from the paths of men ;
And every hundred years to rise
And learn the world, and sleep again ;
To sleep thro' terms of mighty wars,
And wake on science grown to more,
On secrets of the brain, the stars,
As wild as aught of fairy lore ;
And all that else the years will show,
The Poet-forms of stronger hours,
The vast Republics that may grow,
The Federations and the Powers ;

Titanic forces taking birth

In divers seasons, divers climes ;
For we are Ancients of the earth,
And in the morning of the times.

So sleeping, so aroused from sleep

Thro' sunny decads new and strange,
Or gay quinquenniads would we reap
The flower and quintessence of change.

Ah, yet would I—and would I might !

So much your eyes my fancy take—
Be still the first to leap to light
That I might kiss those eyes awake !
For, am I right or am I wrong,
To choose your own you did not care ;
You'd have *my* moral from the song,
And I will take my pleasure there :
And, am I right or am I wrong,
My fancy, ranging thro' and thro',
To search a meaning for the song,
Perforce will still revert to you ;

Nor finds a closer truth than this
All-graceful head, so richly curl'd,
And evermore a costly kiss
The prelude to some brighter world.

For since the time when Adam first
Embraced his Eve in happy hour,
And every bird of Eden burst
In carol, every bud to flower,
What eyes, like thine, have waken'd hopes ?
What lips, like thine, so sweetly join'd ?
Where on the double rosebud droops
The fullness of the pensive mind ;
Which all too dearly self-involved,
Yet sleeps a dreamless sleep to me ;
A sleep by kisses undissolved,
That lets thee neither hear nor see :
But break it. In the name of wife,
And in the rights that name may give,
Are clasp'd the moral of thy life,
And that for which I care to live.

EPILOGUE.

So. Lady Flora, take my lay,
And, if you find a meaning there,
O whisper to your glass, and say,
“ What wonder, if he thinks me fair ? ”
What wonder I was all unwise,
To shape the song for your delight
Like long-tail'd birds of Paradise,
That float thro' Heaven, and cannot light ?
Or old-world trains, upheld at court
By Cupid-boys of blooming hue—
But take it—earnest wed with sport,
And either sacred unto you.

AMPHION.

My father left a park to me,
But it is wild and barren.
A garden too with scarce a tree
And waster than a warren :
Yet say the neighbours when they call,
It is not bad but good land,
And in it is the germ of all
That grows within the woodland.

O had I lived when song was great
In days of old Amphion,
And ta'en my fiddle to the gate,
Nor cared for seed or scion !

And had I lived when song was great,
And legs of trees were limber,
And ta'en my fiddle to the gate,
And fiddled in the timber !

'Tis said he had a tuneful tongue,
Such happy intonation,
Wherever he sat down and sung
He left a small plantation ;
Wherever in a lonely grove
He set up his forlorn pipes,
The gouty oak began to move,
And flounder into hornpipes.

The mountain stirr'd its bushy crown,
And, as tradition teaches,
Young ashes pirouetted down
Coquetting with young beeches ;
And briony-vine and ivy-wreath
Ran forward to his rhyming,
And from the valleys underneath
Came little copses climbing.

The birch-tree swang her fragrant hair,
The bramble cast her berry,
The gin within the juniper
Began to make him merry,
The poplars, in long order due,
With cypress promenaded,
The shock-head willows two and two
By rivers galloped.

Came wet-shod alder from the wave,
Came yews, a dismal coterie ;
Each pluck'd his one foot from the grave,
Poussetting with a sloe-tree :
Old elms came breaking from the vine,
The vine stream'd out to follow,
And, sweating rosin, plump'd the pine
From many a cloudy hollow.

And wasn't it a sight to see,
When, ere his song was ended,
Like some great landslip, tree by tree,
The country-side descended ;

And shepherds from the mountain-eaves
Look'd down, half-pleased, half-frightened,
As dash'd about the drunken leaves
The random sunshine lighten'd !

Oh, nature first was fresh to men,
And wanton without measure ;
So youthful and so flexile then,
You moved her at your pleasure.
Twang out, my fiddle ! shake the twigs !
And make her dance attendance ;
Blow, flute, and stir the stiff-set sprigs,
And scirrhou roots and tendons.

'Tis vain ! in such a brassy age
I could not move a thistle ;
The very sparrows in the hedge
Scarce answer to my whistle ;
Or at the most, when three-parts-sick
With strumming and with scraping,
A jackass heehaws from the rick,
The passive oxen gaping.

But what is that I hear ? a sound
Like sleepy counsel pleading :
O Lord !—'tis in my neighbour's ground,
The modern Muses reading.
They read Botanic Treatises,
And Works on Gardening thro' there,
And Methods of transplanting trees,
To look as if they grew there.

The wither'd Misses ! how they prose
O'er books of travell'd seamen,
And show you slips of all that grows
From England to Van Diemen.
They read in arbours clipt and cut,
And alleys, faded places,
By squares of tropic summer shut
And warm'd in crystal cases.

But these, though fed with careful dirt,
Are neither green nor sappy ;
Half-conscious of the garden-squirt,
The poor things look unhappy.

Better to me the meanest weed
That blows upon its mountain,
The vilest herb that runs to seed
Beside its native fountain.

And I must work thro' months of toil,
And years of cultivation,
Upon my proper patch of soil
To grow my own plantation.
I'll take the showers as they fall,
I will not vex my bosom,
Enough if at the end of all
A little garden blossom.

ST. AGNES.



I.

DEEP on the convent-roof the snows

Are sparkling to the moon :

My breath to heaven like vapour goes :

May my soul follow soon !

The shadows of the convent-towers

Slant down the snowy sward,

Still creeping with the creeping hours

That lead me to my Lord :

Make Thou my spirit pure and clear

As are the frosty skies,

Or this first snowdrop of the year

That in my bosom lies.

II.

As these white robes are soiled and dark,
 To yonder shining ground ;
As this pale taper's earthly spark,
 To yonder argent round ;
So shows my soul before the Lamb,
 My spirit before Thee ;
So in mine earthly house I am,
 To that I hope to be.
Break up the heavens, O Lord ! and far,
 Thro' all yon starlight keen,
Draw me, thy bride, a glittering star,
 In raiment white and clean.

III.

He lifts me to the golden doors ;
 The flashes come and go ;
All heaven bursts her starry floors,
 And strows her lights below,
And deepens on and up ! the gates
 Roll back, and far within
For me the Heavenly Bridegroom waits,
 To make me pure of sin.

The sabbaths of Eternity.

One sabbath deep and wide—

A light upon the shining sea—

The Bridegroom with his bride !

SIR GALAHAD.

I.

My good blade carves the casques of men,
My tough lance thrusteth sure,
My strength is as the strength of ten,
Because my heart is pure.
The shattering trumpet shrilleth high,
The hard brands shiver on the steel,
The splinter'd spear-shafts crack and fly,
The horse and rider reel :
They reel, they roll in clanging lists,
And when the tide of combat stands,
Perfume and flowers fall in showers,
That lightly rain from ladies' hands.

II.

How sweet are looks that ladies bend
On whom their favours fall !
For them I battle till the end,
To save from shame and thrall :
But all my heart is drawn above,
My knees are bow'd in crypt and shrine :
I never felt the kiss of love,
Nor maiden's hand in mine.
More bounteous aspects on me beam,
Me mightier transports move and thrill ;
So keep I fair thro' faith and prayer
A virgin heart in work and will.

III.

When down the stormy crescent goes,
A light before me swims,
Between dark stems the forest glows,
I hear a noise of hymns :
Then by some secret shrine I ride ;
I hear a voice, but none are there ;
The stalls are void, the doors are wide,
The tapers burning fair.

Fair gleams the snowy altar-cloth,
The silver vessels sparkle clean,
The shrill bell rings, the censer swings,
And solemn chaunts resound between.

IV.

Sometimes on lonely mountain-meres
I find a magic bark ;
I leap on board : no helmsman steers :
I float till all is dark.
A gentle sound, an awful light !
Three angels bear the holy Grail :
With folded feet, in stoles of white,
On sleeping wings they sail.
Ah, blessed vision ! blood of God !
My spirit beats her mortal bars,
As down dark tides the glory slides,
And star-like mingles with the stars.

V.

When on my goodly charger borne
Thro' dreaming towns I go,
The cock crows ere the Christmas morn,
The streets are dumb with snow.

The tempest crackles on the leads,
And, ringing, spins from brand and mail :
But o'er the dark a glory spreads,
And gilds the driving hail.
I leave the plain, I climb the height :
No branchy thicket shelter yields :
But blessed forms in whistling storms
Fly o'er waste fens and windy fields.

VI.

A maiden knight—to me is given
Such hope, I know not fear ;
I yearn to breathe the airs of heaven
That often meet me here.
I muse on joy that will not cease,
Pure spaces clothed in living beams,
Pure lilies of eternal peace,
Whose odours haunt my dreams ;
And, stricken by an angel's hand,
This mortal armour that I wear,
This weight and size, this heart and eyes,
Are touch'd, are turn'd to finest air.

vii.

The clouds are broken in the sky,
And thro' the mountain-walls
A rolling organ-harmony
Swells up, and shakes and falls.
Then move the trees, the copses nod,
Wings flutter, voices hover clear :
“ O just and faithful knight of God !
Ride on ! the prize is near.”
So pass I hostel, hall, and grange ;
By bridge and ford, by park and pale,
All-arm'd I ride, whate'er betide,
Until I find the holy Grail.

EDWARD GRAY.

SWEET Emma Moreland of yonder town

Met me walking on yonder way,

“ And have you lost your heart ?” she said ;

“ And are you married yet, Edward Gray ?”

Sweet Emma Moreland spoke to me :

Bitterly weeping I turn'd away :

“ Sweet Emma Moreland, love no more

Can touch the heart of Edward Gray.

“ Ellen Adair she loved me well,

Against her father's and mother's will .

To-day I sat for an hour and wept,

By Ellen's grave, on the windy hill.

“ Shy she was, and I thought her cold ;
Thought her proud, and fled over the sea :
Fill’d I was with folly and spite,
When Ellen Adair was dying for me.

“ Cruel, cruel the words I said !
Cruelly came they back to-day :
‘ You’re too slight and fickle,’ I said,
‘ To trouble the heart of Edward Gray.’

“ There I put my face in the grass—
Whisper’d, ‘ Listen to my despair :
I repent me of all I did :
Speak a little, Ellen Adair !’

“ Then I took a pencil, and wrote
On the mossy stone, as I lay,
‘ Here lies the body of Ellen Adair ;
And here the heart of Edward Gray !’

“ Love may come, and love may go,
And fly, like a bird, from tree to tree :
But I will love no more, no more,
Till Ellen Adair come back to me.

“ Bitterly wept I over the stone :
Bitterly weeping I turn'd away :
There lies the body of Ellen Adair !
And there the heart of Edward Gray !”

WILL WATERPROOF'S LYRICAL MONOLOGUE.

MADE AT THE COCK.



O PLUMP head-waiter at The Cock,
To which I most resort,
How goes the time ? 'Tis five o'clock,
Go fetch a pint of port :
But let it not be such as that
You set before chance-comers,
But such whose father-grape grew fat
On Lusitanian summers.

No vain libation to the Muse,
But may she still be kind,
And whisper lovely words, and use
Her influence on the mind,

To make me write my random rhymes,
Ere they be half-forgotten ;
Nor add and alter, many times,
Till all be ripe and rotten.

I pledge her, and she comes and dips
Her laurel in the wine,
And lays it thrice upon my lips,
These favour'd lips of mine ;
Until the charm have power to make
New lifeblood warm the bosom,
And barren commonplaces break
To full and kindly blossom.

I pledge her silent at the board :
Her gradual fingers steal
And touch upon the master-chord
Of all I felt and feel.
Old wishes, ghosts of broken plans,
And phantom hopes assemble ;
And that child's heart within the man's
Begins to move and tremble.

Thro' many an hour of summer suns,
By many pleasant ways,
Like Hezekiah's, backward runs
The shadow of my days :
I kiss the lips I once have kiss'd ;
The gas-light wavers dimmer ;
And softly, thro' a vinous mist,
My college friendships glimmer.

I grow in worth, and wit, and sense,
Unboding critic-pen,
Or that eternal want of pence,
Which vexes public men,
Who hold their hands to all, and cry
For that which all deny them—
Who sweep the crossings, wet or dry,
And all the world go by them.

Ah yet, though all the world forsake,
Though fortune clip my wings,
I will not cramp my heart, nor take
Half-views of men and things.

Let Whig and Tory stir their blood :

There must be stormy weather ;

But for some true result of good

All parties work together.

Let there be thistles, there are grapes ;

If old things, there are new ;

Ten thousand broken lights and shapes,

Yet glimpses of the true.

Let rafts be rife in prose and rhyme,

We lack not rhymes and reasons,

As on this whirligig of Time

We circle with the seasons.

This earth is rich in man and maid ;

With fair horizons bound :

This whole wide earth, of light and shade

Comes out, a perfect round.

High over roaring Temple-bar,

And, set in Heaven's third story,

I look at all things as they are,

But thro' a kind of glory.

* * * *

Head-waiter, honour'd by the guest
Half-mused, or reeling-ripe,
The pint, you brought me, was the best
That ever came from pipe.
But though the port surpasses praise,
My nerves have dealt with stiffer.
Is there some magic in the place ?
Or do my peptics differ ?

For since I came to live and learn,
No pint of white or red
Had ever half the power to turn
This wheel within my head,
Which bears a season'd brain about,
Unsubject to confusion,
Though soak'd and saturate, out and out,
Thro' every convolution.

For I am of a numerous house,
With many kinsmen gay,
Where long and largely we carouse
As who shall say me nay :

Each month, a birth-day coming on,
 We drink defying trouble,
Or sometimes two would meet in one,
 And then we drank it double ;

Whether the vintage, yet unkept,
 Had relish fiery-new,
Or, elbow-deep in sawdust, slept,
 As old as Waterloo ;
Or stow'd (when classic Canning died)
 In musty bins and chambers,
Had cast upon its crusty side
 The gloom of ten Decembers.

The Muse, the jolly Muse, it is !
 She answer'd to my call,
She changes with that mood or this,
 Is all-in-all to all :
She lit the spark within my throat,
 To make my blood run quicker,
Used all her fiery will, and smote
 Her life into the liquor.

And hence this halo lives about
The waiter's hands, that reach
To each his perfect pint of stout,
His proper chop to each.
He looks not like the common breed
That with the napkin dally ;
I think he came, like Ganymede,
From some delightful valley.

The Cock was of a larger egg
Than modern poultry drop,
Stept forward on a firmer leg,
And cramm'd a plumper crop ;
Upon an ampler dunghill trod,
Crow'd lustier late and early,
Sipt wine from silver, praising God,
And raked in golden barley.

A private life was all his joy,
Till in a court he saw
A something-pottle-bodied boy,
That knuckled at the taw :

He stoop'd and clutch'd him, fair and good.

Flew over roof and casement :

His brothers of the weather stood

Stock-still for sheer amazement.

But he, by farmstead, thorpe and spire,

And follow'd with acclaims,

A sign to many a staring shire,

Came crowing over Thames.

Right down by smoky Paul's they bore,

With motion less or greater ;

One fix'd for ever at the door,

And one became head-waiter.

* * * *

But whither would my fancy go ?

How out of place she makes

The violet of a legend blow

Among the chops and steaks !

'Tis but a steward of the can,

One shade more plump than common ;

As just and mere a serving-man

As any, born of woman.

I ranged too high : what draws me down
 Into the common day ?
Is it the weight of that half-crown,
 Which I shall have to pay ?
For, something duller than at first,
 Nor wholly comfortable,
I sit (my empty glass reversed),
 And thrumming on the table :

Half fearful that, with self at strife,
 I take myself to task ;
Lest of the fullness of my life
 I leave an empty flask :
For I had hope, by something rare,
 To prove myself a poet ;
But, while I plan and plan, my hair
 Is gray before I know it.

So fares it since the years began,
 Till they be gather'd up ;
The truth, that flies the flowing can,
 Will haunt the vacant cup :

And others' follies teach us not,
 Nor much their wisdom teaches ;
 And most, of sterling worth, is what
 Our own experience preaches.

Ah ! let the rusty theme alone !
 We know not what we know.
 But for my pleasant hour, 'tis gone,
 'Tis gone, and let it go.
 'Tis gone : a thousand such have slipt
 Away from my embraces,
 And fall'n into the dusty crypt
 Of darken'd forms and faces.

Go, therefore, thou ! thy betters went
 Long since, and came no more ;
 With peals of genial clamour sent
 From many a tavern-door,
 With twisted quirks and happy hits,
 From misty men of letters ;
 The tavern-hours of mighty wits—
 Thine elders and thy betters.

Hours, when the Poet's words and looks
Had yet their native glow :
Not yet the fear of little books
Had made him talk for show ;
But, all his vast heart sherris-warm'd,
He flash'd his random speeches ;
Ere days, that deal in ana, swarm'd
His literary leeches.

So mix for ever with the past,
Like all good things on earth !
For should I prize thee, could'st thou last,
At half thy real worth ?
I hold it good, good things should pass :
With time I will not quarrel :
It is but yonder empty glass
That makes me maudlin-moral.

* * * *

Head-waiter of the chop-house here,
To which I most resort,
I too must part : I hold thee dear
For this good pint of port.

For this, thou shalt from all things suck
Marrow of mirth and laughter ;
And, wheresoe'er thou move, good luck
Shall fling her old shoe after.

But thou wilt never move from hence,
The sphere thy fate allots :
Thy latter days increased with pence
Go down among the pots :
Thou battenest by the greasy glean
In haunts of hungry sinners,
Old boxes, larded with the steam
Of thirty thousand dinners.

We fret, we fume, would shift our skins,
Would quarrel with our lot ;
Thy care is, under polish'd tins,
To serve the hot-and-hot ;
To come and go, and come again,
Returning like the pewit,
And watch'd by silent gentlemen,
That trifle with the cruet.

Live long, ere from thy topmost head

The thick-set hazel dies ;

Long, ere the hateful crow shall tread

The corners of thine eyes :

Live long, nor feel in head or chest

Our changeful equinoxes,

Till mellow Death, like some late guest,

Shall call thee from the boxes.

But when he calls, and thou shalt cease

To pace the gritted floor,

And, laying down an unctuous lease

Of life, shalt earn no more ;

No carved cross-bones, the types of Death,

Shall show thee past to Heaven :

But carved cross-pipes, and, underneath,

A pint-pot, neatly graven.

LADY CLARE.

LORD RONALD courted Lady Clare,
I trow they did not part in scorn ;
Lord Ronald, her cousin, courted her,
And they will wed the morrow morn.

“ He does not love me for my birth,
Nor for my lands so broad and fair ;
He loves me for my own true worth,
And that is well,” said Lady Clare.

In there came old Alice the nurse,
Said, “ Who was this that went from thee ? ”
“ It was my cousin,” said Lady Clare,
“ To-morrow he weds with me.”

“ O God be thank’d ! ” said Alice the nurse,
“ That all comes round so just and fair :
Lord Ronald is heir of all your lands,
And you are not the Lady Clare.”

“ Are ye out of your mind, my nurse, my nurse ? ”
Said Lady Clare, “ that ye speak so wild ? ”
“ As God ’s above,” said Alice the nurse,
“ I speak the truth : you are my child.

“ The old Earl’s daughter died at my breast ;
I speak the truth, as I live by bread !
I buried her like my own sweet child,
And put my child in her stead.”

“ Falsely, falsely have ye done,
O mother,” she said, “ if this be true,
To keep the best man under the sun
So many years from his due.

“ Nay now, my child,” said Alice the nurse.

“ But keep the secret for your life,
And all you have will be Lord Ronald’s.
When you are man and wife.”

“ If I’m a beggar born,” she said,
“ I will speak out, for I dare not lie.
Pull off, pull off, the brooch of gold,
And fling the diamond necklace by.”

“ Nay now, my child,” said Alice the nurse.

“ But keep the secret all ye can.”
She said “ Not so : but I will know
If there be any faith in man.”

“ Nay now, what faith ? ” said Alice the nurse,

“ The man will cleave unto his right.”
“ And he shall have it,” the lady replied,
“ Though I should die to-night.”

“ Yet give one kiss to your mother dear !

Alas, my child, I sinn’d for thee.”

“ O mother, mother, mother,” she said,

“ So strange it seems to me.

“ Yet here ’s a kiss for my mother dear,

My mother dear, if this be so,

And lay your hand upon my head,

And bless me, mother, ere I go.”

She clad herself in a russet gown,

She was no longer Lady Clare :

She went by dale, and she went by down.

With a single rose in her hair.

Down stept Lord Ronald from his tower :

“ O Lady Clare, you shame your worth !

Why come you drest like a village maid,

That are the flower of the earth ? ”

“ If I come drest like a village maid,

I am but as my fortunes are :

I am a beggar born,” she said,

“ And not the Lady Clare.”

“ Play me no tricks,” said Lord Ronald,

“ For I am yours in word and in deed.

Play me no tricks,” said Lord Ronald,

“ Your riddle is hard to read.”

O and proudly stood she up !

Her heart within her did not fail :

She look’d into Lord Ronald’s eyes,

And told him all her nurse’s tale.

He laugh’d a laugh of merry scorn :

He turn’d, and kiss’d her where she stood :

“ If you are not the heiress born,

And I,” said he, “ the next in blood—

“ If you are not the heiress born,
And I,” said he, “ the lawful heir,
We two will wed to-morrow morn,
And you shall still be Lady Clare.”

THE LORD OF BURLEIGH.

IN her ear he whispers gaily,

“ If my heart by signs can tell,
Maiden, I have watch'd thee daily,
And I think thou lov'st me well.”

She replies, in accents fainter,

“ There is none I love like thee.”
He is but a landscape-painter,
And a village maiden she.

He to lips, that fondly falter,
Presses his without reproof ;

Leads her to the village altar,
And they leave her father's roof.

“ I can make no marriage present ;
Little can I give my wife.

Love will make our cottage pleasant,
And I love thee more than life.”

They by parks and lodges going
See the lordly castles stand :
Summer woods, about them blowing,
Made a murmur in the land.
From deep thought himself he rouses,
Says to her that loves him well,
“ Let us see these handsome houses
Where the wealthy nobles dwell.”
So she goes by him attended,
Hears him lovingly converse,
Sees whatever fair and splendid
Lay betwixt his home and hers ;
Parks with oak and chestnut shady,
Parks and order'd gardens great,
Ancient homes of lord and lady,
Built for pleasure and for state.
All he shows her makes him dearer :
Evermore she seems to gaze
On that cottage growing nearer,
Where they twain will spend their days.
O but she will love him truly !
He shall have a cheerful home ;

She will order all things duly,
 When beneath his roof they come.
Thus her heart rejoices greatly,
 Till a gateway she discerns
With armorial bearings stately,
 And beneath the gate she turns ;
Sees a mansion more majestic
 Than all those she saw before :
Many a gallant gay domestic
 Bows before him at the door.
And they speak in gentle murmur,
 When they answer to his call,
While he treads with footstep firmer.
 Leading on from hall to hall.
And, while now she wonders blindly,
 Nor the meaning can divine,
Proudly turns he round and kindly,
 “ All of this is mine and thine.”
Here he lives in state and bounty,
 Lord of Burleigh, fair and free
Not a lord in all the county
 Is so great a lord as he.

All at once the colour flushes

Her sweet face from brow to chin :

As it were with shame she blushes,

And her spirit changed within.

Then her countenance all over

Pale again as death did prove :

But he clasp'd her like a lover,

And he cheer'd her soul with love.

So she strove against her weakness,

Though at times her spirits sank :

Shaped her heart with woman's meekness

To all duties of her rank :

And a gentle consort made he,

And her gentle mind was such

That she grew a noble lady,

And the people loved her much.

But a trouble weigh'd upon her,

And perplex'd her, night and morn,

With the burthen of an honour

Unto which she was not born.

Faint she grew, and ever fainter,

As she murmur'd, " Oh, that he

Were once more that landscape-painter,
Which did win my heart from me ! ”
So she droop'd and droop'd before him,
Fading slowly from his side :
Three fair children first she bore him,
Then before her time she died.
Weeping, weeping late and early,
Walking up and pacing down,
Deeply mourn'd the Lord of Burleigh,
Burleigh-house by Stamford-town.
And he came to look upon her,
And he look'd at her and said,
“ Bring the dress, and put it on her,
That she wore when she was wed.”
Then her people, softly treading,
Bore to earth her body, drest
In the dress that she was wed in,
That her spirit might have rest.

SIR LAUNCELOT & QUEEN GUINEVERE.

A Fragment.

LIKE souls that balance joy and pain,
With tears and smiles from heaven again
The maiden Spring upon the plain
Came in a sun-lit fall of rain.

 In crystal vapour everywhere
Blue isles of Heaven laugh'd between,
And, far in forest-deeps unseen,
The topmost linden gather'd green
 From draughts of balmy air.

Sometimes the linnet piped his song :
Sometimes the throstle whistled strong :
Sometimes the sparrowhawk, wheel'd along,

Hush'd all the groves from fear of wrong :

By grassy capes with fuller sound
In curves the yellowing river ran,
And drooping chestnut-buds began
To spread into the perfect fan,
Above the teeming ground.

Then, in the boyhood of the year,
Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere
Rode thro' the coverts of the deer,
With blissful treble ringing clear.

She seem'd a part of joyous Spring :
A gown of grass-green silk she wore,
Buckled with golden clasps before ;
A light-green tuft of plumes she bore
Closed in a golden ring.

Now on some twisted ivy-net,
Now by some tinkling rivulet,
On mosses thick with violet,
Her cream-white mule his pastern set :

And now more fleet she skimm'd the plains

Than she whose elfin prancer springs
By night to eery warblings,
When all the glimmering moorland rings
 With jingling bridle-reins.

As she fled fast thro' sun and shade,
The happy winds upon her play'd,
Blowing the ringlet from the braid :
She look'd so lovely, as she sway'd
 The rein with dainty finger-tips,
A man had given all other bliss,
And all his worldly worth for this,
To waste his whole heart in one kiss
 Upon her perfect lips.

A FAREWELL.

Flow down, cold rivulet, to the sea,
Thy tribute wave deliver :
No more by thee my steps shall be,
For ever and for ever.

Flow, softly flow, by lawn and lea,
A rivulet then a river :
No where by thee my steps shall be,
For ever and for ever.

But here will sigh thine alder tree,
And here thine aspen shiver ;
And here by thee will hum the bee,
For ever and for ever.

A thousand suns will stream on thee,
A thousand moons will quiver ;
But not by thee my steps shall be,
For ever and for ever.

THE BEGGAR MAID.

HER arms across her breast she laid ;

She was more fair than words can say :

Bare-footed came the beggar maid

Before the king Cophetua.

In robe and crown the king stept down.

To meet and greet her on her way :

“ It is no wonder,” said the lords,

“ She is more beautiful than day.”

As shines the moon in clouded skies,

She in her poor attire was seen :

One praised her ancles, one her eyes,

One her dark hair and lovesome mien.

So sweet a face, such angel grace,

In all that land had never been :

Cophetua sware a royal oath :

“ This beggar maid shall be my queen ! ”

THE VISION OF SIN.



I HAD a vision when the night was late :
A youth came riding toward a palace-gate.
He rode a horse with wings, that would have flown.
But that his heavy rider kept him down.
And from the palace came a child of sin.
And took him by the curls, and led him in.
Where sat a company with heated eyes,
Expecting when a fountain should arise :
A sleepy light upon their brows and lips—
As when the sun, a crescent of eclipse.
Dreams over lake and lawn, and isles and capes—
Suffused them, sitting, lying, languid shapes.
By heaps of gourds, and skins of wine, and piles of grapes.

Then methought I heard a mellow sound.
Gathering up from all the lower ground ;

Narrowing in to where they sat assembled
Low voluptuous music winding trembled,
Wov'n in circles : they that heard it sigh'd,
Panted hand in hand with faces pale,
Swung themselves, and in low tones replied ;
Till the fountain spouted, showering wide
Sleet of diamond-drift and pearly hail ;
Then the music touch'd the gates and died ;
Rose again from where it seem'd to fail,
Storm'd in orbs of song, a growing gale ;
Till thronging in and in, to where they waited,
As 'twere a hundred-throated nightingale,
The strong tempestuous treble throb'd and palpitated ;
Ran into its giddiest whirl of sound,
Caught the sparkles, and in circles,
Purple gauzes, golden hazes, liquid mazes,
Flung the torrent rainbow round :
Then they started from their places,
Moved with violence, changed in hue,
Caught each other with wild grimaces,
Half-invisible to the view,
Wheeling with precipitate paces

To the melody, till they flew,
Hair, and eyes, and limbs, and faces.
Twisted hard in fierce embraces,
Like to Furies, like to Graces,
Dash'd together in blinding dew :
Till, kill'd with some luxurious agony,
The nerve-dissolving melody
Flutter'd headlong from the sky.

And then I look'd up toward a mountain-tract,
That girt the region with high cliff and lawn :
I saw that every morning, far withdrawn
Beyond the darkness and the cataract,
God made Himself an awful rose of dawn,
Unheeded : and detaching, fold by fold,
From those still heights, and, slowly drawing near,
A vapour heavy, hueless, formless, cold,
Came floating on for many a month and year,
Unheeded : and I thought I would have spoken,
And warn'd that madman ere it grew too late :
But, as in dreams, I could not. Mine was broken.
When that cold vapour touch'd the palace gate.

And link'd again. I saw within my head
A gray and gap-tooth'd man as lean as death,
Who slowly rode across a wither'd heath,
And lighted at a ruin'd inn, and said :

“ Wrinkled ostler, grim and thin !
Here is custom come your way ;
Take my brute, and lead him in,
Stuff his ribs with mouldy hay.

“ Bitter barmaid, waning fast !
See that sheets are on my bed ;
What ! the flower of life is past :
It is long before you wed.

“ Slip-shod waiter, lank and sour,
At The Dragon on the heath !
Let us have a quiet hour,
Let us hob-and-nob with Death.

“ I am old, but let me drink ;
 Bring me spices, bring me wine ;
I remember, when I think,
 That my youth was half divine.

“ Wine is good for shrivell'd lips.
 When a blanket wraps the day,
When the rotten woodland drips,
 And the leaf is stamp'd in clay.

“ Sit thee down, and have no shame,
 Cheek by jowl, and knee by knee :
What care I for any name ?
 What for order or degree ?

“ Let me screw thee up a peg ;
 Let me loose thy tongue with wine :
Callest thou that thing a leg ?
 Which is thinnest ? thine or mine ?

“ Thou shalt not be saved by works :

Thou hast been a sinner too :

Ruin'd trunks on wither'd forks,

Empty scarecrows, I and you !

“ Fill the cup, and fill the can :

Have a rouse before the morn :

Every minute dies a man,

Every minute one is born.

“ We are men of ruin'd blood ;

Therefore comes it we are wise.

Fish are we that love the mud,

Rising to no fancy-flies.

“ Name and fame ! to fly sublime

Thro' the courts, the camps, the schools,

Is to be the ball of Time,

Bandied in the hands of fools.

“ Friendship !—to be two in one—

Let the canting liar pack !

Well I know, when I am gone,

How she mouths behind my back.

“ Virtue !—to be good and just—

Every heart, when sifted well,

Is a clot of warmer dust,

Mix'd with cunning sparks of hell.

“ O ! we two as well can look

Whited thought and cleanly life

As the priest, above his book

Leering at his neighbour's wife.

“ Fill the cup, and fill the can .

Have a rouse before the morn :

Every minute dies a man,

Every minute one is born.

“ Drink, and let the parties rave :

They are fill'd with idle spleen ;
Rising, falling, like a wave,
For they know not what they mean.

“ He that roars for liberty

Faster binds the tyrant's power ;
And the tyrant's cruel glee
Forces on the freer hour.

“ Fill the can, and fill the cup :

All the windy ways of men
Are but dust that rises up,
And is lightly laid again.

“ Greet her with applausive breath,

Freedom, gaily doth she tread ;
In her right a civic wreath,
In her left a human head.

“ No, I love not what is new ;
 She is of an ancient house :
And I think we know the hue
 Of that cap upon her brows.

“ Let her go ! her thirst she slakes
 Where the bloody conduit runs :
Then her sweetest meal she makes
 On the first-born of her sons.

“ Drink to lofty hopes that cool—
 Visions of a perfect State :
Drink we, last, the public fool,
 Frantic love and frantic hate.

“ Chant me now some wicked stave, \n
 Till thy drooping courage rise,
And the glow-worm of the grave
 Glimmer in thy rheumy eyes.

“ Fear not thou to loose thy tongue ;
Set thy hoary fancies free :
What is loathsome to the young
Savours well to thee and me.

“ Change, reverting to the years,
When thy nerves could understand
What there is in loving tears,
And the warmth of hand in hand.

“ Tell me tales of thy first love—
April hopes, the fools of chance ;
Till the graves begin to move,
And the dead begin to dance.

“ Fill the can, and fill the cup :
All the windy ways of men
Are but dust that rises up,
And is lightly laid again.

“ Trooping from their mouldy dens
The chap-fallen circle spreads :
Welcome, fellow-citizens,
Hollow hearts and empty heads !

“ You are bones, and what of that ?
Every face, however full,
Padded round with flesh and fat,
Is but modell'd on a skull.

“ Death is king, and Vivat Rex !
Tread a measure on the stones,
Madam—if I know your sex,
From the fashion of your bones.

“ No, I cannot praise the fire
In your eye—nor yet your lip :
All the more do I admire
Joints of cunning workmanship.

“ Lo ! God’s likeness—the ground-plan—
Neither modell’d, glazed, or framed :
Buss me, thou rough sketch of man,
Far too naked to be shamed !

“ Drink to Fortune, drink to C’hance,
While we keep a little breath !
Drink to heavy Ignorance !
Hob-and-nob with brother Death !

“ Thou art mazed, the night is long,
And the longer night is near :
What ! I am not all as wrong
As a bitter jest is dear.

“ Youthful hopes, by scores, to all,
When the locks are crisp and curl’d ;
Unto me my maudlin gall
And my mockeries of the world.

“ Fill the cup, and fill the can !

Mingle madness, mingle scorn !

Dregs of life, and lees of man :

Yet we will not die forlorn.”

The voice grew faint : there came a further change ;

Again arose the mystic mountain-range :

Below were men and horses pierced with worms,

And slowly quickening into lower forms ;

By shards and scurf of salt, and scum of dross,

Old splash of rains, and refuse patch'd with moss.

Then some one spake : “ Behold ! it was a crime

Of sense avenged by sense that wore with time.”

Another said : “ The crime of sense became

The crime of malice, and is equal blame.”

And one : “ He had not wholly quench'd his power ;

A little grain of conscience made him sour.”

At last I heard a voice upon the slope,

Cry to the summit, “ Is there any hope ? ”

To which an answer peal'd from that high land,
But in a tongue no man could understand ;
And on the glimmering limit far withdrawn
God made Himself an awful rose of dawn.

THE SKIPPING-ROPE.



SURE never yet was Antelope

Could skip so lightly by.

Stand off, or else my skipping-rope

Will hit you in the eye.

How lightly whirls the skipping-rope !

How fairy-like you fly !

Go, get you gone, you muse and mope—

I hate that silly sigh.

Nay, dearest, teach me how to hope,

Or tell me how to die.

There, take it, take my skipping-rope,

And hang yourself thereby.

Move eastward, happy earth, and leave
Yon orange sunset waning slow :
From fringes of the faded eve,
O, happy planet, eastward go ;
Till over thy dark shoulder glow
Thy silver sister-world, and rise
To glass herself in dewy eyes
That watch me from the glen below.

Ah, bear me with thee, lightly borne,
Dip forward under starry light,
And move me to my marriage-morn,
And round again to happy night.

BREAK, break, break,

On thy cold gray stones, O Sea !

And I would that my tongue could utter

The thoughts that arise in me.

O well for the fisherman's boy,

That he shouts with his sister at play !

O well for the sailor lad,

That he sings in his boat on the bay !

And the stately ships go on

To their haven under the hill ;

But O for the touch of a vanish'd hand,

And the sound of a voice that is still !

Break, break, break,

At the foot of thy crags, O Sea !

But the tender grace of a day that is dead

Will never come back to me.

THE POET'S SONG.

THE rain had fallen, the Poet arose,
He pass'd by the town, and out of the street ;
A light wind blew from the gates of the sun,
And waves of shadow went over the wheat,
And he sat him down in a lonely place,
And chanted a melody loud and sweet,
That made the wild-swan pause in her cloud,
And the lark drop down at his feet.

The swallow stopt as he hunted the bee,
The snake slipt under a spray,
The wild hawk stood with the down on his beak,
And stared, with his foot on the prey,

And the nightingale thought, " I have sung many songs,
But never a one so gay,
For he sings of what the world will be
When the years have died away."

THE END.

The Idyl of "Dora" was partly suggested by one of Miss Mitford's pastorals; and the ballad of Lady Clare, by the novel of "Inheritance."

LONDON :
BRADBURY AND EVANS, PRINTERS, WHITEFRIARS.

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